



R. White sculp.

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PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES
Concerning
OBEDIENCE,
AND THE
Love of God.

Vol. II.

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To the Right Honorable

DANIEL,
Earl of Nottingham.

MY LORD,

I *Am very sensible, that you are the known Favourer of Men of eminent Worth and Learning; I only take this Opportunity of acquainting the World, that You were so, of the Author of these following Discourses, that so you may receive in larger Measures those Tributes which are due to Publick*

The Dedication.

lick Benefactors, the Prayers and Praises of Mankind; For they who have, or shall be bettered by This great Author's Works, are oblig'd in a peculiar Manner to remember that Right Honourable Person, who by his Countenance did not only encourage him to be serviceable, but did really endeavour to render him more useful to us, by procuring for him a little Recess from the Toil and Labours of his weighty Employment: Had this succeeded, in all Humane Probability he had lived longer, and then we should have seen that truly Pious and most sublime Design he intended to pursue; and

The Dedication.

and should have been well acquainted with that uncultivated part of Religion, The Duties of Piety towards God : And perhaps by Them , we should have given a guess at the Praises and Hallelujahs of those blest Beings above, when they had been managed with that Strength of Eloquence, that Fervour of Spirit, pois'd and temper'd with such a Judgment as his. But he is gone to bear a part in the Heavenly Choir , where (if he knows what is done here below) it will be a pleasing Prospect to my dear departed Friend , to see Your Lordship and your Noble Family, the Possessors and design'd Heirs
of

The Dedication.

*of the Honours of both Worlds.
I am,*

My Lord,

*Your Lordships most Humble
and most devoted Servant,*

HUMPHREY ZOUCH.

I JOHN V. 3.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments; and his Commandments are not grievous.

IN the first Verse the *Apostle* asserts, that *whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt*, that is, ſo believes as to act ſuitable to his Belief, *is born of God*; he is become a Child of God by partaking of his Nature, and ſtamped with his Likeneſs; and *every one that loveth him that be- gat*, i. e. God his Heavenly Father, loveth him alſo that is begotten of him, hath a true hearty Kindneſs for all that are God's Children. And then in the ſecond Verſe, by *this*, ſaith he, *we know that we love the Children of God*, and conſequently that we are born of God, *if we love God and keep his Commandments*; that is, if we ſo love him as to keep his Commandments. And indeed, if we do not ſo love him, we do not love him at all, and conſequently we do not love his Children, nor are we his Children our ſelves; of which he gives a full Proof in the Text; *for this is the love of God, that*

we keep his Commandments ; and his Commandments are not grievous.

In which Words, you have First an Account of the Love of God, what it is ; *This is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments :* and Secondly, a Motive to engage us to the Practice of it, *and his Commandments are not grievous.*

I begin with the first of these, the Account of this Love of God, what it is ; *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments.* By the Love of God here we are not to understand God's Love to us, but our Love to God, as is plain by this, because 'tis placed in our keeping his Commandments. This is the Love of God, that is, this is the *natural* Effect and *proper* Exercise of the Love of God ; for it is certain that keeping God's Commandments is not the Affection of Love to him, but the Effect of it. So that the Meaning of the Words is this, this is the most *genuine* Expression and *inseparable* Effect of our Love of God, that we obey his Laws. And hence our Saviour makes this the *proper* Tryal and Proof of our Love to him, *If ye love me, keep my Commandments,* John xiv. 15. for this he tells us, *ver. 23. is the necessary* Consequence of our Love to him ; *If any man love me, he will keep my words,* i. e. this will most

most certainly be the Effect of his Love to me, that he will be obedient to my Will. And by this he plainly tells us he will judge of the Sincerity of our Friendship to him, *John xv. 14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* From all which it is evident, that the most proper and *characteristical* Expression of our Love to God, is our keeping his Commandments. And indeed considering that God is our *Sovereign* Lawgiver, there are no Actions by which we can so naturally express our Affection to him, as by those of Obedience and Submission to his Laws; and therefore we find in *Scripture*, that to *love God*, and obey his Laws, and to *hate God* and disobey them, are generally used promiscuously for one another, and that for very good reason; for here our Love and Hatred of *God* are not considered as conversant about God as God (in which sense perhaps there is no Creature in the World can be said to hate him) but as conversant about him as *Lord* and *Governour* of the World; as he gives Laws to Mankind, whereby he commands them what to do, and forbids them what to avoid. And in this Sense, to love *God* is to love him as *Governing* and *Commanding*, and as such, we can no otherwise express our Love to him, but by

keeping his Commandments. But for the farther clearing of this, I shall in Prosecution of the Argument do these two Things:

I. Shew you that wheresoever the Love of God is, it will most certainly prove a *Principle* of Obedience to him.

II. That the Love of God is in it self the most *perfect* and *effectual* Principle of Obedience.

I. That wheresoever the Love of God is, it will most certainly prove a *Principle* of Obedience to him. And this, I doubt not, will evidently appear, if we consider that all the *natural* Expressions of our Love, as it is terminated upon God, do of their own accord finally resolve themselves into Obedience to his Will. For Love, wheresoever it is *heartly* and *sincere*, always expresses it self in such *Symptoms* as these ;

1. In industriously endeavouring to resemble the *Beloved*.

2. In conforming the *Will*, *Designs*, and *Intentions*, to the Will, and Designs, and Intentions of the *Beloved*.

3. In a *solicitous* Care of avoiding those Things which may any ways displease or distaste the *Beloved*.

4. In a *cheerful* Readiness to undergo any thing, be it never so *hard* or *difficult*, for the sake of the *Beloved*. All which
Expres-

Expressions of our Love, when it is terminated upon God, do most naturally run into Obedience to his Will.

1. If we love God, our Love will express it self in endeavouring to resemble him. For every Man esteems what he loves to be lovely, and we naturally wish that *that* were in our selves which we esteem to be lovely in *another*; that so being like him, we may appear as lovely in *his* Eyes as he doth in *ours*. And so if we love God, we must necessarily esteem him exceeding lovely and amiable, and that which we esteem and love as lovely in him, we cannot but wish for and desire in our selves out of a *natural* Affectation of Loveliness: And that he may have the same Reason to love us as we have to love him, we must needs desire to resemble him in all those *amiable* Things that do endear him to us. But now those Beauties in God being all of them only *moral*, which are the *immediate* Objects of our Love to him, are capable of being transcribed by Imitation, and made ours by *copying* and *writing* after them in our Actions; so that if we heartily desire to partake of them, our Desire will necessarily engage us to imitate them; for how can we be said heartily to desire that *Good* which we may have, but will

take no Care to acquire? I confess, did we love him for his *Eternity*, or his *Power*, or his *Immensify*, we might wish to be like him, but all in vain; because in these Perfections we are not capable of imitating him: But the Beauties for which we love him, are his *Goodness*, and *Wisdom*, and *Righteousness*, and *Mercy*, and the like; all which being *imitable* by us, we may, if we please, derive into our selves, and transcribe into *our own* Natures. So that if we love God, we must necessarily desire to resemble him in those Things for which we love him; and those things being all of an *imitable* nature, our Desire of resembling him will oblige and excite us to a *careful* and *constant* Imitation of him. But now to obey God, and to imitate him in those *Moral Perfections* for which we love him, are one and the same thing. Thus when I obey God in being universally *just* and *righteous* towards himself and all his Creation, I imitate him in that *essential* Justice and Equity of his Nature, which is the *eternal* Rule of all his Actions. When I obey him in *doing good* to all that are within the Reach of my Charity, I imitate him in the *overflowing* Bounty and *unlimited* Goodness of his Nature. In a word, when I obey him in forgiving those that injure me,

me, I imitate him in his *boundless* Mercy, and Readiness to forgive Offenders. And in fine, all our Obedience is comprehended in being *pure* as he is *pure*, and *holy* as he is *holy*; in being *good* as he is *good*, *just* as he is *just*, *merciful* as he is *merciful*: For though the Acts and Expressions of these *Moral Perfections* in us are in many Instances different from what they are in *God*, by reason of that Difference of *Natures, Relations, and Circumstances* that there is between him and us; yet the Perfections in *general* are of the same kind in him and us, though the *particular* Expressions of them are various by reason of those *accidental* Differences. For though he doth not do all those *particular* Actions which he requires of us, and consequently we in doing those Actions cannot be said to imitate the same Actions in *God*; yet we imitate *God* in the *general*, in doing those Actions which he himself would have done, had he had our *Natures*, and been in our *Relations and Circumstances*. Thus *God* doth not pray, because he hath none *superior* to him; nor humble himself, because he is infinitely *great* and *perfect*; nor practise *Chastity* and *Temperance*, because he is a *pure Spirit*, and hath no Commerce with *bodily* Affections; and consequently we in

doing of these Actions cannot be said to imitate the same Actions in *God*, because he doth not the same. But he constantly doth whatsoever is *reasonable* for him to do as *God*, and as *Governour* of the World, and never varies in the *least Punctilio* from the *eternal* Rules of Equity and Goodness; by which he gives a *glorious* Example unto all his Reasonable Creatures, to excite both *Angels* and *Men* to do what is fit and reasonable for them in their several States and Relations: And what is reasonable for us Men to do, he hath declared to us in his Laws; so that by obeying his Laws we imitate *God* in the general, by doing what is reasonable for us; though what is reasonable for *God* and us, whose Natures and Relations are so different, be not the same in all *particular* Instances. So that in general you see, to obey and imitate *God* is but the same Thing in other Words. Wherefore since the Love of *God* doth necessarily include a Desire of resembling him, and that Desire necessarily produces a *constant* and *vigorous* Imitation of him, and that Imitation is all one with obeying him; it hence necessarily follows, that if our Love of him be sincere, it must finally resolve into Obedience. For how can I love *God*, and not think him lovely? How can I
think

think him lovely, and not desire to be *like* him? How can I desire to be *like* him, and not take Care to imitate him? And how else can I imitate him, but by obeying him?

2. If we love *God*, our Love will conform our *Wills*, *Designs*, and *Intentions* to the Will, Designs, and Intentions of *God*. For Love always unites the Will of the *Lover* to the Will of the *Beloved*; and if it be mutual, it twists them together into one Will, and confounds all their Discords into a *perfect* Harmony; because Love doth necessarily conclude in it Benevolence, which consists in an *unfeigned* Will that all may go well with him whom we love; that he may enjoy every *Good* that he wills, and accomplish every *Desire*, *Design*, and *Intention*, so far as it is *good* and *reasonable* for him. So that supposing that the *Beloved* be but his own Friend, that he wills and designs and pursues nothing but what is really *good* and *grateful* to him; the *Lover*, as such, ought necessarily to conspire with him in the *same* Will, and Designs, and Pursuits. If therefore we heartily love *God*, we cannot but *will* what he *wills*, and design and intend what he intends and designs; every Motion of that *first* great Mover will be an *effectual* Law to govern all
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our Motions, and our Wills, and Desires, and Designs, and Intentions, like the *lesser* Wheels of an *Automaton*, will presently run at the first Impulse of that *great* Master-Wheel without the least Rub or Hesitation, and in despite of all the Contentions of a *rebellious* Flesh, and all the Counter-strivings of a *perverse* ungovernable Heart, our Love will so captivate our Wills to God's, that between him and us there will be but one Will, and End, and Interest. And our Wills being thus subjected to him by the *invincible* Necessity of Love, all our *inferior* Powers, like smaller *Garrisons* when the *Master-Fort* is taken, will presently surrender of their own accord. For no Man can be a Rebel to *God* whether he will or no ; because the Will is the *commanding* Principle, and hath such an *absolute* Empire over all our Actions, that 'tis impossible for us to do what we will not. So that if we *will* and design what *God wills* and designs, our Practice must necessarily be conformable to his Will, so far as we know and understand it ; for as God's Will gives Law to ours, so our Will gives Law to our Actions, and so by consequence the Will of *God* must be the *Sovereign* Law whereby both are regulated and determined. From hence therefore it is evident,
that

that if we sincerely love God, we shall *will* as he *wills*; and that if we *will* as he *wills*, we shall act as he would have us; and therefore for any Man to say that he loves God while he *wills* contrary to his Will, or that his Will is reconciled to God's while he acts contrary to his Commands, is *gross* Hypocrisy and *deep* Dissimulation: For as the Love of God resolves necessarily into an Union of Wills with him, so *that* Union of Wills resolves necessarily into Obedience to his Laws.

3. If we love God, that Love will express it self in a *solicitous* Care of avoiding every Thing that may displease or distaste him. For the *greatest* Ambition of Love is to appear lovely and amiable in the Eyes of its *Beloved*; and that it may do so, it doth most studiously avoid whatsoever may be displeasing or distastful to it; and most industriously endeavours to adorn it self with all those *obliging* Graces that are apt to endear and recommend it. And so if we love God we cannot but desire to be lovely in his Eyes; and *that* Desire, if it be sincere and hearty, must necessarily engage us to an endeavour of acquiring whatsoever is *amiable* and *pleasing*, and of avoiding whatsoever is *hateful* and *grievous* to him. But now *Vertue* and *true Goodness* are

are the only Beauties that do endear us to God, and render us lovely in his Eyes, and Sin and Wickedness the only Deformities for which he hates and abhors us : For his Love and Hatred are not regulated like ours, by the *unaccountable* Impulses of a *mutable* Fancy, but by *steady* and *eternal* Rules; so that he can never love what he once hated, nor hate what he once loved. For the Immutability of God's Love and Hatred consists not in this, that he always loves and hates the same Persons, but that he always loves and hates Persons for the same Reason and Motive. And indeed that Love is but a *foolish* Fondness, that Hatred but an *unreasonable* Antipathy, that, without any *reasonable* Motive, always determines on the same Person : And if God loves and hates our Persons upon *reasonable* Motives, his Love and Hatred would be *fickle* and *mutable*, if when those Motives cease his Love and Hatred should continue. If he should continue to love us when the Reason is wholly ceased that first moved him thereunto, he must either love us for no Reason, which would be a *foolish* Fondness, or he must love us for *contrary* Reasons, which would be Fickleness and Inconstancy : And therefore when God ceases to love and hate the same Persons
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when the Reason of his loving and hating them ceases, it proceeds not from the Inconstancy, but the Immutability of his *Love* and *Hatred*; for though they may change their Objects, yet they can never change their Reasons. For the Reasons of God's *Love* and *Hatred* are in the Objects whom he loves and hates; and therefore if he changes the Objects of his *Love* and *Hatred*, and when they themselves are changed, if he love a Person whom he hated when that Person is changed from *hateful* to *lovely*; or hate a Person whom he loved when that Person is changed from *lovely* to *hateful*; it is not he that changes, but the Persons who are the Objects of his Love or his Hatred: For amidst all Changes of Objects, his *Love* and *Hatred* are eternally the *same*, because they are eternally fixed and determined to the *same* Reasons. But now his Love being naturally founded in *Likeness*, what can we suppose should be the Reason of God's *Love* or *Hatred* to us, but only our *Likeness* or *Unlikeness* to himself? For if we resemble him in that *Goodness*, and *Truth*, and *Purity*, and *Justice*, which are *essential* to his Nature, he must needs love us for his own sake, because we partake of his Nature, and are allied to him by a Similitude of Temper and Perfections. But then
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when we are not only unlike, but contrary to him ; when we are *impure, spiteful, and malicious* ; when we are *false, unrighteous, and unreasonable* ; he hath an *Antipathy* against us founded in his very Nature, and he can no more love us whilst we are so contrarily disposed to him, than he can hate himself. Wherefore since there is nothing can render us lovely in God's Eyes but only our resembling him in *Purity and Goodness*, nothing can render us *hateful, offensive, and distastful* to him, but our being *impure, and wicked, and unlike* him ; it hence necessarily follows, that we can no otherwise render our selves *amiable* to him, no otherwise avoid offending and grieving him, but only by keeping his Commandments ; for therein all those *Graces* are enjoined wherein our Resemblance of him consists ; and all those *Vices* are forbid that are contrary to him, and do deform us in his Eyes. So that by doing his Will, we imitate his Nature ; and shall acquire such a *god-like* Temper of Mind, as will render us more *glorious and lovely* in his Esteem, than if we were decked with Stars, or cloathed in a Robe of Sun-beams ; whereas on the contrary, by disobeying his Will we contract such an *Unlikeness* and *Contrariety* to him, as renders us more offensive to him
than

than the most *loathsome* Deformities in Nature. For in God's eyes there is nothing ugly but Sin, nothing amiable but Virtue and true Goodness. Wherefore since our Love of God necessarily includes an earnest Desire of rendring our selves lovely and amiable in his Esteem, and since we have no other way to accomplish this Desire but only by keeping his Commandments; it hence necessarily follows, that we cannot sincerely love him whilst we disobey him. For with what Confidence can we pretend to love him, when it is indifferent to us whether we render our selves *lovely* or *loathsome* to him; when by disobeying his Will we wilfully contract those Deformities which we know he abhors, and which are more *odious* in his Eyes than any of the most *loathsome* Spectacles in Nature? Is it possible that *true* Love should consist with taking Pleasure in the only Things that can grieve and offend its Object? Or were there ever such *Lovers* heard of, that affected the Deformities that were most *hateful* to the *Beloved*? No, no; he that heartily loves, must desire to be beloved; and he that desires to be beloved, must desire to be lovely. Wherefore since nothing is lovely in God's Eyes but what is like God, and we cannot be like him, unless we keep his
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Commandments ; what an Immodesty is it in us to pretend to love him while we chuse to disobey him ?

4. And lastly, If we love *God* sincerely, we shall be ready chearfully to undergo any Thing for his sake, be it never so *hard* and *difficult* : For Love is a *bold* and *vigorous* Passion, it makes *weak* Things strong, and turns *Cowards* into *Heroes*, and warms and animates the Heart with such a *generous* Fire, as disdains all Opposition, and courageously *out-braves* the *greatest* Dangers and Difficulties. For he that loves heartily would do any Thing for the sake of his *Beloved* ; and then measuring his Strength by the Greatness of his Desires, he thinks himself able to do whatsoever he will. So strongly doth this Passion transport Nature beyond the Bounds of its Abilities, inspiring it with such Force and Vigour as that scarce any thing is able to withstand it. If therefore we love *God* sincerely and heartily, our Love must necessarily resolve into Obedience to his Will, be it never so *hard* and *difficult* : For our Love will so *enliven* and *animate* our Endeavours of serving him, and carry us with such Spirit and Alacrity through all the *weary* Stages of our Duty, that it will be our Meat and Drink to do his Will ; and there is no Instance of
Obe-

Obedience, be it never so hard and difficult, but our Love will *smother*, and render it not only *easy*, but *delightful*. For what I do for *him* whom I love, I do for my self, *his* Pleasures being *mine*, and our Wills, and Ends, and Interests being involved in one *another*. So that if my Love be in any Measure *intense* and *cordial*, I shall do his Pleasure and perform his Will with the *same* Complacency and Delight as if I were doing my own ; and whatsoever Difficulties I meet with in serving him, I shall encounter them with Joy, that I am furnished with Opportunities of expressing the Zeal and Sincerity of my Love to him. So that to pretend to love *God*, and yet to boggle at the Difficulties of obeying him, is the most *shameful* Hypocrisy in nature ; for if we did as highly love him as we pretend, our Wills would be so swallowed up in *his*, that it would be our Joy and Recreation to serve him, and the very Thought that we are doing what is *pleasing* and *grateful* to him, would level all the *Mountains* of Difficulties in our way, and render them not only *accessible*, but *easy*. He therefore that stumbles at every Straw, and startles at every Difficulty in *Religion*, must be a *notorious* Hypocrite if he pretend to the Love of *God* : for where *true* Love is,

Difficulty is so far from daunting it, that that animates and encourages it, and instead of blunting its Activity, whets and renders it more keen and vigorous; because the *greater* the Difficulty is, the *greater* is its Opportunity of manifesting its *own* Sincerity, and thereby of recommending it self to its *Beloved*; the Joy of which not only ballances, but endears all its Pains and Trouble. Hence the Apostle tells us, that *there is no fear in love, and that perfect love casteth out fear*, 1 John iv. 18. It inspires us with such *Bravery* and *Courage*, that there is no Difficulty in our Obedience to him whom we love, that can daunt or terrify us. Wherefore since this is a *necessary* Property of the Love of God to make us ready to undergo any Thing for his sake, this also must necessarily resolve into the keeping his Commandments; for if we are willing to do any thing for God, we shall surely be willing to obey him; and though our Obedience in some Instances may be difficult, yet our Love, if it be real, will conquer its way through them all.

And thus you see how all the *essential* Properties of the Love of God do finally resolve into Obedience; from whence it is evident, that wheresoever the Love of God is, it will most certainly prove a *Principle* of Obedience.

II. I proceed now to the second Head of Discourse, which was to shew, *that the Love of God is it self the most perfect Principle of Obedience.* Not that I think all other Principles in their own nature *bad*; for God himself hath proposed other Principles of Action to us besides this of Love; he hath denounced his *fearful* Threatnings against us to alarm our *Fear*; that by *that* we may be moved to obey him, and propounded his *glorious* Promises to us to excite our *Hope*, that *that* may be a Spring and Principle of Obedience in us. And certainly that can be no *bad* Principle which is excited in us by *divine* Motives: but yet it is most certain, that there is no Principle whatsoever can be acceptable to God, that is quite separated from Love to him; for that which makes it acceptable is this, that it is a Principle of *Universal* Obedience. But now the Love of God being the *greatest* Instance of our Obedience, *that* can be no Principle of *universal* Obedience that is wholly separated from it. 'Tis true, the *Religion* of most Men begins upon a Principle either of *Hope* or *Fear*, and it cannot be denied but they are very *good* Beginners; but yet till by these we are induced to love God as well as to practise all other Duties, we are by no means *pleasing* and

acceptable to him : So that though the *Fear* of *Punishment* and the *Hope* of *Reward* are good Ingredients in the Principle of our Obedience, yet till they have some Intermixtures of Love with them, they can make no Claim to the *divine* Acceptation. There may be indeed, and at first there generally is, much less of *Love* in this Principle of Obedience than of *Hope* and *Fear*, whilst yet the whole Composition is very acceptable to God; for the *lowest* Degree of *cordial* Love, intermixed with our *Hope* and *Fear*, will leaven and consecrate them into an *acceptable* Principle of Obedience; but still the *less* Love there is in it, the *more weak*, and *languid*, and *imperfect* it is, and in all its Progresses towards Perfection its Maturity is to be measured by the Degrees of Love that are in it; and till our Love is arrived unto that Degree of Ardency as to become the *predominant* Motive and Master-Ingredient in it; our State in *Goodness* is very *slow* and *imperfect*. So that in short, the Principle of our Obedience is more and more perfect the *more* of *Love* there is in it, and the *less* of *Hope* and *Fear*; and when *Hope* and *Fear* are all swallowed up in *Love*, and that is the *sole* Spring of Action within us, then it is the Principle of *Heaven*, and the Soul that acts
and

and animates the *Religion of the Spirits of just men made perfect*. But to convince you how much our Obedience is perfected by Love, I shall briefly give you these following Instances of it:

1. It rendereth our Obedience *universal* and *unconfined*.

2. *Spritely* and *chearful*.

3. *Natural* and *easy*.

4. *Constant* and *steady*.

1. Love renders our Obedience *universal* and *unconfined*. When Men are acted only by a Principle of *Fear*, they must be very *narrow* and *stingy* in their *Religion*; for they will be sure to do no more than just what is necessary to *quiet* their Fears and *calm* their Consciences; and because they do not like what they do, but are meerly forced upon it by the Terror and Anguish of *their own* Minds, therefore, if they can, they will find some Way to pacify their Consciences without doing it, or at least with doing as *little* as may be, or with doing that only which they like *best*, and is most *agreeable* to their *vitiating* Tempers. Thus Persons of *sour* and *morose* Natures, when they are acted meerly by the Terrors of their Consciences, commonly betake themselves to some *little affected* Singularities and Severities in *Religion*; they will

put on some *distinguisbing* Garb, and tip their Tongues with some *peculiar* Phrases, and screw their Faces into a most *devout* and *mortified* Figure ; they will condemn themselves to a State of *Silence*, and retire from all the Pleasures and most *innocent* Festivities of Conversation ; they will frown all *good* Humour out of their Houses, and will not endure so much as a Smile in their Families, especially on the *Lord's-Day* ; and take a world of Care and Pains to moap their Children into *unsociable* Statues, and to train them up in the Religion of *pensive* Looks, and *solemn* Faces, and *ejaculated* Eyes ; for this is such a Reformation as is suitable to their *sour* and *sarty* Natures ; and therefore with this they will seek to bribe their Consciences to connive at all their *black* and *devilish* Inclinations. Thus also it is usual for *Slanderers* and *Backbiters*, *contentious* and *ensorious* Persons, when they are under an Agony of Conscience, to list themselves into some *Sect* or *Party*, where, under a Pretence of being the *only* People of *God*, they may consecrate their most *unhallowed* Passions, and rail and backbite with *Zeal* and *Devotion* ; where they may spit all their Venom in *spiritual* Gossiping, and freely employ the Talent of their *Ill-nature* in *damning* and censuring those they dissent

diffent from ; for this is such a Conversion as best agrees with their *cankorous* Inclinations, so that if they can but cheat their Conscience with it, *that* and their *beloved* Lust will be very well reconciled. Thus also the *covetous* and *gripping* Oppressor, when he cannot otherwise still the Cries of his Conscience, will betake himself to some of the *cheaper* Exercises of *Religion* ; he will *fast* and *pray*, hear *Sermons*, and receive *Sacraments*, because all these Things he can do without intrrenching upon his Vice ; he can say his *Prayers* for nothing, and save Money by keeping a *Fast*, and eat and drink at the Sacrament *gratis* ; all this is so *cheap* a *Religion*, that it costs him nothing to maintain it, and so his *covetous* Mind hath no Reason to grudge at it ; so that if his Conscience will be but satisfied with this, his Lust and *that* may shake hands and be Friends. And to name no more, thus when the *intemperate* and *lascivious* Person is dogg'd by the Fears of his *guilty* Mind, it is usual for him to sigh and mourn, and make *woful* Confessions of his Sins ; and when he hath done so, to endeavour to perswade himself that this is *true* Repentance ; which if he can do, he may sin on securely, provided he doth but perpetually keep himself in this Circle of *repenting* and

sinning, and *sinning* and *repenting*; but if he cannot so cheat himself, he will next fly to the *Sanctuary* of a *partial* Reformation, and disband the Vices he can best spare, that so he may keep his more *beloved* ones in Pay; hoping that by a Sacrifice of some *few* of his Sins, he may make an Atonement for all the rest. Thus when Men are only acted by their Fears, they will find some way or *other* to contract their *Religion* into so *narrow* a Compass, that it shall be sure not to intrench *too* far upon the Liberties of their Lusts. For he that doth a Thing out of Fear is averse to the doing it, and that Averstation will so stint and limit him, that he will contrive all Ways to do as little as he can, and still the *less* he is forced to do, the *better* he will be pleas'd.

But Love is that great Soul that acts and animates the *whole* Body of *Religion*, and equally diffuses its Influence through every Part and Member of it; for the Will of the *Beloved* is the Law of the *Lover*, and every Thing pleases him, that is pleasing to *him* whom he loves. So that if we love *God*, we shall do what he commands, because it is his Will and Pleasure; and that Reason extends equally to all as well as to any Instances of Obedience; and there-

therefore if the Motive of our Obedience be this, that it is God's Will and Pleasure, we must necessarily obey him, so far as we understand, in every Thing that is so. For if we love *God*, there will be such a Consent and Harmony between *his* Will and *ours*, that we shall be best pleased with what pleases him; and being so, our Obedience will be no longer limited by any *particular Likes* or *Dislikes* of our own, which will then all vail and prostrate themselves to God's *sovereign* Pleasure, and so there will be nothing but *that* to set Limits and Bounds to our Obedience. So that then we shall be so far from contriving how to escape doing his Will, that we shall be ready to court all Opportunities of pleasing him, and be so passionately desirous of doing what we think is grateful to him, that we shall not only perform what he requires by *explicite* Command, but be ready to comply with the most *secret* Notices and Intimations of his Pleasure, and to do whatsoever we think will please him when it is performed, whether it be commanded or no.

2. Love renders our Obedience *spritely* and *vigorous*: For it is certain, there is no Passion in *humane* Nature so *active* and *vigorous* as that of Love; for in this all the other

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other Passions are seated as in their *common* Root and Principle, and like so many Streams, though they run *several* Ways and in *different* Channells, yet do they all issue out of one *common* Spring, and that is Love. For the Love of our selves is the *Parent* of all our Passions ; 'tis that which makes us *hate* what is contrary to us, and *desire* and *hope* for whatsoever is pleasant and agreeable. And when we love any *particular* Object, and our Wills are pleasingly affected with the Beauty of it, if it be a Thing that is possible for us to enjoy, that excites in us a *Desire* of Enjoyment ; if together with the Possibility there be a Probability of enjoying it, that excites *Hope* and *Expectation* ; but if there be not, that excites *Fear*, and this *Hope* and *Fear* being exalted to their *highest* Degree, turn into *Confidence* and *Desperation*. If any Difficulty oppose it self to our Enjoyment, that excites *Choler*, and *Courage*, and *Boldness* ; and if we surmount those Difficulties that hinder our Enjoyment, that excites *Joy* and *Exaltation* of Mind. Thus Love, you see, as soon as it is taken with the Beauty of an Object, immediately kindles its *Desires*, excites its *Hope* and *Fear*, and carries the Fire into all the Passions which hold of its Empire ; so that having the *united* Force of

of all the other Passions at its Beck and Command, its self must needs be extremely *potent* and *vigorous*; and consequently when it is terminated upon *God*, and become the *reigning* Principle of our Obedience to him, there is no Passion in our Natures can have that Influence upon us to make us *active* and *vigorous* in the doing of his Will, as *this* may reasonably be supposed to have; because when we are under the Command of Love, *that* having in it the Force of all our other Passions, must necessarily move and act us with all their *united* Influence. And when the *separate* Force of all our Passions, like so many *single* Threads, are twisted into one Cord, with what a *potent*, I had almost said *omnipotent* Vigour must they draw and attract us? When our Love of *God* shall all at once awaken in us the *Desire* and *Hope* of enjoying him, the *Fear* and *Displeasure* of losing him, the *Resolution* and *Courage* to charge through every Difficulty that opposes our *Fruition* of him; and our Obedience shall be all at once informed and animated with the *united* Force of all those *mighty* Passions; how *active* and *vigorous* must it needs be? For the Wise Man tells us, that *Love is as strong as Death*, Cant. viii. 6. that 'tis an equal Match for the *all-conquering* King of
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Terrors, to whose Power the *mightiest* Things do stoop: And indeed it must needs be strong when it hath all the Force of *Humane* Nature in it, and is winged with the *united* Vigour of so many *strong* and *active* Affections. Hence the Apostle attributes a *constraining* Vertue to it, 2 Cor. v. 14. *For the Love of God constraineth us*; it sweetly *tyrannizes* over all our Faculties; and by a *willing* Violence forces and captivates us into Obedience. But when a Man is acted only by a Principle of *Fear*, he must needs drive on heavily in the Course of his Obedience; because what a Man doth out of Fear, he would not do; so that he acts with Aversation, and moves all along counter to his own Inclinations, and hath not the *joint* Concurrence of his *other* Affections as he hath when he acts out of Love; and consequently his Passions thwarting and crossing *one another*, do retard and hinder each *others* Motions. So that though the Motion of Fear doth finally prevail, yet it is so broken and weakned by the counter-motions of Inclination, that it cannot act us with that *Spritelines*s and *Vigour* as otherwise it would do: for whilst our Fear gives Wings to us, our Inclination hangs a Clog at our Heels, which wearies those Wings, and slackens and retards their Flight.

Flight. Whereas, on the contrary, when we are acted by Love, there is no Counter-motion within to let and hinder us, but all our Passions unite and conspire, and like the *inferior Orbs* of *Heaven* move harmoniously with Love the first *Great-mover*, because there is nothing within to check or allay it, and so we move on freely *secundo flumine*, with the full and *uninterrupted* Current of our Natures. So that Love, you see, is a most *active* and *vigorous* Soul; it makes us all Life, and Spirit, and Wing, and animates our *Religion* with such a *spritely* Flame, as nothing is able to controul or suppress. If therefore we were but once thoroughly informed with the Love of *God*, this would so enliven us, that there is nothing in *Religion* would be too hard for us; this would turn Toils into Recreations, and Difficulties into Pleasures, and make us so *nimble* and *agile* in our Obedience, that we should *run the ways of Gods Commandments*, as *David* said he would do, when *God* should enlarge his heart with the love of him, *Psal. cxix. 32.* And whereas *languid* Souls, enfeebled with the want of this *generous* Passion, find Impossibilities, and complain of Impotencies, and make a stop; we should go on and conquer with an *invincible* Power. Thus Love, you see, is
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the most *spritely* and *vigorous* Principle of Obedience.

3. Love renders our Obedience *free* and *cheerful* and *voluntary*. He who obeys God only from a Principle of Fear, obeys him against his Will; he takes down his Duty as *sick Men* do *Physick*, with Loathing and Reluctancy, and only submits to it as a more *tolerable* Penance than the *present* Horror that he feels, and the *after-Damnation* that he fears; he only chuses it as the *least* of two *Evils*, that is, as a Thing that he hates, though not in so *great* a Degree as he doth those *greater* Evils which he knows are inseparable to his not chusing it: And while it is thus with him, it is impossible he should obey with any Freedom or Alacrity. For how can a Man cheerfully comply with what he hates, or become a *Volunteer* to that which is his Torment? He may labour indeed at his Duty, and tug hard, like a *Gally-slave*, at the Oar, but alas! 'tis sore against his Will; he would fain be at his Lust again, but that he is chained to his Duty, and kept in Awe by that *flaming* Scourge that is held over him; so that he is perfectly pressed to serve God, and like an *unwilling* Victim is dragged to his Altars. Now though this may be a *good* Beginning of *Religion*, which through the
Passion

Passion of Fear doth usually make its *first* Entrance into the Soul, yet if it stop here, and doth not pass forwards into Love, it is but half way, and will never be able to obtain an *entire* Possession. For whilst we obey God meerly out of Fear, we want one half of our *Religion*, and that is Love, which is that Half too wherein the Subjection of our Souls to God consisteth; for while we only fear him, that may constrain us to an *eternal* Homage and Obedience; but 'tis Love alone that can *inthrone* him in our Wills, and make us *Volunteers* in his Service. But when once this *divine* Fire is inkindled within our Breasts, it will by Degrees melt away all our *secret* Repugnancies and Aversations to our Duty, and so *mould* and *temper* our Wills to the Will of God, that at last our Obedience will be no longer a Burthen to us, but we shall run to our Duty with the *same* Complacency and Delight, as we do now to our Pleasures and Recreations, and do the Will of our *Father* upon Earth as it is done by our Brethren in *Heaven*; who being all inflamed with Love to him, do find a *Heaven* of Joys in serving and adoring him. For if we did heartily love God, 'tis impossible but we should feel a Pleasure in pleasing him; our Wills would so *sympa-*
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thize with *his*, that we should feel his Joys and taste his Pleasures; and those Things only would be *irksom* and *ungrateful* to us, which we know do grieve and distaste him. For Love turns Service into Wages, and pays her self with the Pleasures of pleasing; she counts all Commands Favours, and is highly satisfied with the Honour of obeying; and if she can but accomplish the Pleasure of her *Beloved*, she thinks her self wholly recompensed for all her *tedious* Toils and Labours. And certainly if our Souls were but inspired with any *considerable* Degrees of this *Heavenly* Passion, we should find such Pleasure in pleasing God, as would for ever engage us to serve him; for then every Service that we rendered *him* would be a *free* Sally of an *enamoured* Will, and so our Hearts would be wrapp'd up in every Duty, and our Souls would still be ascending *Heavenwards*, like the *Angel* that appeared to *Manoah*, in the Flames of all our Sacrifices. So that this Excellency also Love hath above all other Principles of Obedience, that it renders our Obedience most *free*, most *cheerful*, and *voluntary*.

4. And lastly, Love renders our Obedience *constant* and *steady*. When a Man's *Religion* is only animated with Fear, as it

is *weak* and *languid* while it lives, so it generally hastens to an *untimely* Period. For Fear is a Passion so burthensom to *humane* Nature, that we cannot but desire to quit and discharge our selves of it as soon as possible may be ; and accordingly the *Apostle* tells us, that *there is torment in Fear*, 1 Joh. 4. 18. for it separates the Soul from the Enjoyment of her self, and gives such an *ungrateful* Tang to all her Pleasures, that she can find no Rest or Satisfaction in any Thing so long as she is haunted with it. Now when that which is the Principle of our *Religion* is a Burthen to us, we cannot but endeavour, if possible, to ease our selves of it; which we cannot otherwise do, but either by going *forwards* to Love, or by returning *back again* to *sinful* Presumption. For as for Fear, it is like the *Wilderness* through which *Israel* passed, a Place where there is no abiding with Content and Satisfaction ; so that we must go *back again* into *Egypt*, or *forwards* to *Canaan*, or be content to sit down in *Misery* and *Disquiet*. For we can never be at Rest, till our Fear is either sweetned with an Intermixture of Love, or stifled with *vain* Hopes and *ungrounded* Presumptions : And there being so many Arts of *Self-deceiving* in the World, and skinning over the Wounds of Conscience, if Men do not speedily cure
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their Fear by Love, they will soon find some *other* Way to extinguish it ; either they will promise their Consciences a *future* Amendment, or else they will *presently* amend by Halves, or else they will take Sanctuary in some *false* Notions in *Religion*, that tend to secure them in their Sins, and render them quietly wicked : These or some *other* Ways they will find to quit themselves of this *troublesome* Passion ; and then when the *Weights* of their Fear are down, the *Wheels* of their *Religion* will stand still immediately. So that you plainly see, that *bare* Fear can never be a *lasting* and *steady* Principle of *Religion* ; and that because it is so troublesome, that Men will not long have the Patience to endure it.

But as for Love, that is naturally a most *sweet* and *grateful* Passion ; it sooths and ravishes the Heart, and puts the Spirits into a *brisk* and *generous* Motion ; and so long as it continues *pure* Love, is always attended with Joy and Pleasure : And being so in it self, it is much more so when it is terminated upon God. For all the Disquietudes of Love arise from the Imperfections of its *Object* ; either the Person *beloved* is *coy* and *cruel*, which imbitters the Love with Sorrow and Regret ; or else he is *fickle* and *inconstant*, which inflames it with Rage and Jealousy. But when
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our Love fixes upon *God*, it hath neither of these Causes of Disturbance; for he is infinitely loving unto all that love him, and he never changes the Objects of his Love, unless they change, and prove *fickle* and *unconstant* in their Affection to him. For whilst he hath the same Reason to love, his Love is always the same, and is as *constant* and *immutable* as his Being. So that in the Love of *God* there is no Reason for any of those Grievances and Jealousies that are so commonly intermingled with *carnal* Loves and Affections; for it being fixed upon an *Object* that doth so well deserve, and will so amply requite it, it can find nothing there but *infinite* Causes of Pleasure and Complacency: For the *Object* of our Love being infinitely lovely, and infinitely loving, the Affection must needs be unspeakably *pleasing* and *grateful*. So that the Love of *God*, you see, must needs be *sweet* and *serene*, and *productive* of the most *delightful* and *ravishing* Emotions, there being nothing in him but what tends to its *greatest* Content and Satisfaction; and being so, it must necessarily prove a most *lasting* Principle of Obedience to him; because wheresoever it is, it is always attended with such *substantial* Pleasures and Delights, that there can be no Temptation to extinguish it; for so long as we feel no-

thing in it but what is highly *grateful* to our Natures, we shall be so far from using Arts to quit our selves of it, that we shall think it our *greatest* Interest to promote and increase it. For still the *more* we love him, the *better* we shall be pleased; and the *better* we are pleased, the *more* we shall endeavour to love him: And so our Pleasure and our Love will mutually provoke and augment one *another*, till both are arrived to the *utmost* Height of their Perfection. Thus the Love of God, you see, is a *lasting* Principle; 'tis a Fire that can live upon the Fuel which it self creates; and maintain it self for ever in Strength and Vigour, by feeding upon the Joys and Pleasures which it produces: So that if this be the Principle upon which we do obey, our *Religion* must needs be *lasting* and *steady*; because it is acted and animated by a Principle that is so.

Having thus demonstrated the Proposition in the Text, *That wheresoever the Love of God is, it will express it self in Obedience to his Will*; I shall now conclude the whole with some *practical* Inferences.

1. From hence I infer, how necessary it is to the very Being of *Religion*, to keep up good Thoughts of God in the World; because without such, Men will never be able to love him; and without Love, they will never be

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reduced to a *through* Submission to his *heavenly* Will. For it is by Love alone that God reigns in our Hearts, and doth both acquire and preserve the Empire of our Souls. We may be awed into a *forced* and *fawning* Submission, meerly by the Dread and Terror of his Power, and be obliged to serve him, as the *Indians* do the *Devil*, for fear he should do us a Mischief, and tear us in pieces; but this is meerly the *Religion* of Slaves, who are forced to undergo *one* Evil for fear of *another*, and to do what they hate for fear of suffering what they cannot endure. And as Slaves do generally hate those whom they fear, and even whilst they are *fawning* and *cringing* to their *imperious* Masters, had much rather cut their Throats if they could do it with safety; so when Men are acted in their Obedience to God meerly by a *slavish* Dread of his Vengeance, they generally hate him whilst they obey him; and if it were in their power, would rather *ungod* him, and pull him down from his Throne, than render him those *Homages* which they dare not withhold. Now is it possible, that he who knows the Hearts of Men, and sees the *inmost* Workings of their Minds, should ever be pleased with such a *base* and *sordid* Religion; a Religion that is conjoyned with such an *inveterate* Hatred to his Person and Go-

vernment, and restrains Men only by the Fear of Punishment from flying in his Face ; a *Religion* that is wholly founded in *Passion*, that causes us to hate him, as well as to fawn upon him ; that carries in it a *secret* Antipathy to his Nature and his Laws, and would much rather vent it self in an *open* Rebellion, than in a *forced* Submission, had it but Power enough to defend it self from his Fury ? And yet this is the *best Religion* that Mankind is capable of without the Love of God. So that if ever we intend to keep up a *generous Religion* in our Souls, such as becomes *free-born* Minds to offer to the great *Sovereign* of the World ; we must be sure to purge out all those *lower* and *rigid* Notions of God that represent him any ways unlovely to us.

2^{ly}. Hence I infer, how miserably those Men are mistaken, that make any Thing a Sign of their Love to God, but what tends to their keeping his Commandments. There are *too* many Persons that are apt to measure their Affection to God and *Christ* by the meer Impressions of *sensitive* Passion, because upon some *moving* and *affecting* Representations of those *amiable* Objects, they feel in themselves the same *sensitive* Emotions as they are wont to do when they fall in Love with other Things ; that is, if they feel their
Spirits

Spirits *soothing* and *ravishing* their Hearts, and their Hearts *diffusing* and *opening* themselves to let in those *soft* and *amorous* Spirits, they conclude themselves presently infinitely in love with God, and with their Saviour : Whereas many times all this is merely the Effect of an *amorous* Complexion, tinctured and inflamed with *Religious Ideas*, and is commonly as remote from the Virtue of Love, as Light is from Darkness, or Heaven from Hell. For as there are many Men who are sincerely good, that yet cannot raise their *sensitive* Passions in their *Religious Exercises* ; that are heartily sorry for their Sins, and yet cannot weep for them ; and do entirely love God, and delight in his Service, and yet cannot move their Blood and Spirits into the *ravishing* Passions of *sensitive* Love and Joy : So on the other hand there are many *gross* Hypocrites that have not one Dram of true Piety in them, who yet in their *Religious Exercises* can put themselves into *wonderous* Transports of *bodily* Passion ; who can pour out their Confessions in Floods of Tears, and cause their Hearts to *dilate* into Raptures of *sensitive* Love, and their Spirits to *tickle* them into Extasies of Joy. Which is purely to be resolved into the *different* Tempers of Mens Bodies ; *some* Tempers being naturally so *calm* and *sedate*, as that they are

scarce capable of being disturbed into a Passion; *others* again so *soft* and *tender*, and *impressible*, that the most *frivolous* Fancy is able to raise a Commotion in them. And hence we see that *some* People can weep most heartily at the Misfortunes of Lovers in *Plays* and *Romances*, and as heartily rejoyce at their *good* Successes, though they know that both are but Fictions and mere *Ideas* of Fancy; whereas *others* can scarce shed a Tear, or raise a *sensitive* Joy at the *real* Calamities or Prosperities of a Friend, whom yet they love a great deal better than others can be supposed to do their feigned and *Romantick* Hero's. And yet because of these *sensitive* Transports which Men do sometimes feel in themselves, when their Fancies have been chafed a while with a *pathetical* Description of *God*, they presently vote themselves his Friends and Lovers; whereas in Truth, that which commonly moves their Affection, is not any thing real either in *God* or in *Christ*; but some *sensual* Beauty attributed to them in *fanciful* Descriptions, that smites their *carnalized* Fancies. For generally we find that it is a *Metaphorical* *God* and *Christ* that such Men fall in love with; they set up an *Idol* of *God* and *Christ* in their Fancies, and dress it in such *carnal* *Metaphors* and *Allusions*, as their *sensual* Minds are most apt to be taken with;

with; and then imagin that it smiles on them, and kisses and caresses them, with all the *pretty* endearments of a *doating* Lover; whereupon they grow so extreamly fond of it, that they are not able to forbear hugging and dandling it: But alas poor Men! they hug the *Cloud* instead of the *Godefs*; and while they think they have *God* and *Christ* in their Arms, embrace nothing but a Specter of their *own* Fancies: For let but any *other* Person, though it were only the *Hero* of a *Romance*, or the *Lover* of a *Play*, be but described to them in the same Language, and the same *glistering* Allusions, and they shall experience in themselves the same Passion for them as they have for their *God* and their *Saviour*. Thus in the *Roman Nunneries* and *Monasteries* we generally find the *Monks* fall in Love with the *Virgin Mary*, whilst the *Nuns* are all enamoured with *Jesus Christ*; that is, they chuse the *Objects* of their Love according to the *different* Inclinations of their Sexes; and the Reason why they chuse so differently, is no *other* than this, that they both frame to themselves such *different carnal* Ideas of the *different* Objects of their Love, as are most suitable and agreeable to their *carnal* Inclinations; but very commonly neither the *Monk* loves the *Virgin Mary*, nor the *Nun*, *Jesus Christ*;

Christ ; but they both meerly doat upon the *different* Images of their own Fancies ; which do not at all represent those *divine* Beauties for which those *sacred* Persons do so well deserve to be beloved. And thus it is *too* commonly among our selves, when yet we pretend to be *zealous* Lovers of God. Wherefore unless we have a mind to deceive our selves, let us no longer depend on such *fallacious* Evidences as these ; but let us try our Love of God by his own Touch-stone ; and that is our Obedience to his *heavenly* Will. *If any man love me, saith our Saviour, he will keep my Words, Jo. xiv. 23. and ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you ; for this, saith St. John, is Love, that ye walk after his Commandments, Eph. ii. 6.* For the Love of God and of *Christ* being a *rational* Love, is only to be valued by those *rational* Effects it produces in us ; if it transform us into the Image of God, and makes us love what he loves, and hate what he hates ; these are much more *certain* Indications of our Love to him, than the most *ravishing* Effects of *sensitive* Passion. For though our Hearts were melted into a Transport and Fondness to him, yet so long as our Hearts and our Practices are incomplicant to his Will and Laws, he will look upon us, and deal with us as Hypocrites and Enemies ;

Enemies; and esteem all our *sensitive* Fondnesses towards him, but as the *base* Flatteries of *Judas*; who kissed him, and then betrayed him.

3ly. Hence I infer, what the *great* Reason is why *God* doth so strictly enjoin us to love him. For there is no Command whatsoever so often repeated in Scripture, as this of loving *God*; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul: What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to love him? O love the Lord all ye his Saints! Take heed therefore to your selves that ye love the Lord your God.* These, and a world of other reiterated Injunctions of Love, do we meet with in the *Sacred Pages*. But how comes this to pass? Doth *God* need our Love, that he so importunately calls for it? Or doth it contribute any thing to his Happiness, to see himself beloved by all this *great* World of Beings; which he hath made, and which he hath endued with the Capacity of loving him? No, no; though doubtless the *best* Thing we can give him is our Love, yet he is *too happy* in himself to need any thing of ours: For he is a *bottomless* Fountain of Happiness, circumscribing all those Blissess that he can need or desire within the *boundless* Circle of his own Being. Or doth he court our Love meerly that he
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may glory in the Number of his Lovers, and pride himself in those *infinite* Flames that concenter in him ? No, nor this neither ; for he is so infinitely *glorious* in himself, that no Act of ours can either add to, or substract from his Glory ; which amidst all the *Hallelujahs* of *Angels* and *Saints*, and all the *Blasphemies* of Men and Devils, shines with the same *unvaried* Splendour and Brightness ; and is neither diminished by our Hatred, nor improved by our Love. Well then, if neither of these be the Reason, what is it ? 'Tis true, the Thing is infinitely *reasonable* in it self, That he who is so lovely in himself, should be beloved ; and that all our Affections should be *united* in him, who is the Fountain of all our Beings and Well-Beings : And *God* who is the Author of our *reasonable* Faculties, cannot but desire that we should act reasonably ; and love that *best*, which best deserves to be beloved. But is there not some *particular* End for which *God* doth so earnestly crave and exact our Love ? Yes, doubtless there is ; and such as is every way worthy of him that hath proposed it. For it cannot be supposed that a Being infinitely *wise*, should ever act without End or Aim ; but *God* being infinitely *happy*, cannot be supposed to propose any End for *his own* Advantage ; because *that* would imply, that
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he wants or desires some Good that he hath not ; and consequently, that he is not happy. But then he being infinitely *good* as well as *happy*, we cannot imagin what *other* End he should have of his Actions, but only to do *good* to his Creatures, and promote their Happiness ; and consequently, the End and Reason for which he doth so importunately demand our Love, is not to add any Thing to himself, but to do *good* to us ; *for our goodness extendeth not to God*, as the Psalmist tells us, xvi. 2. And though the Love of *God* be a very *great* Perfection to our Natures, yet *Job* tells us, that *it is no gain at all to God, that we make our ways perfect*, Job xxii. 3. But though it is none to *God*, yet it is an *infinite* Gain to our selves ; and that is the End and Reason for which he requires it : For, as I have already shew'd you, of all the Principles of our Obedience to *God*, Love is the most *pregnant* and *fruitful*. Now *God* requires us to obey him for *our own* Good, he having enjoyed us nothing but what tends to the Perfection and Happiness of our Natures ; and he requires us to love him, that so we may the more intirely and perfectly obey him ; and thereby more speedily arrive to that Happiness for which his *infinite* Goodness hath designed us. So that all the profit both of our
Love

Love and Obedience, accrues to our selves ; 'tis we only that reap the Fruit of *our own* Virtues ; we only that are exalted by those *Homages* that we render to our *Maker* ; for he is as *happy* without our Love, as he is with it ; and all those *united* Flames of *Angels* and *Saints* that meet and concenter in him, add not one spark to the *infinite* Element of his Happiness ; which were not *infinite*, could it admit of Increase : But the Lovers themselves are *glorified* by their Love ; and because they are so, *God* requires and exacts it. For our Love being the *great* Soul of our Obedience, and our Obedience the *necessary* Means of our Happiness, the Profit of both must necessarily redound to our selves : and 'tis we only that must be enriched and glorified by them. For this Reason therefore *God* requires our Love, that it may be a *living* Principle to Obedience ; and that being so, it might accelerate our Happiness ; for he whose Love of *God* is but arrived to the Degree of a reigning Principle of Obedience, so as that his Obedience proceeds more from his Love than from any other *Passion*, doth already border on the *heavenly* State, and is within the Confines of Perfection. For as for the *Inhabitants* of *Heaven*, they are all acted by *pure* Love ; which makes their Obedience *pure* and *perfect* :

fect: They see God face to face; and by their Sight are all inflamed with Love to him; and by their Love are winged with *everlasting* Vigour and Readiness to serve him; and all their Aversations to his *Heavenly* Will being swallowed up in perfect Love, they not only obey without Murmuring, but with *infinite* Ravishment and Pleasure; and never feel themselves more in *Heaven*, than while they are serving, praising, and adoring him. This is the *happy* State of those *heavenly* Lovers; and to this we are approaching with *full* Speed, while we obey from a Principle of Love: For Love will carry us on with Wind and Tide, from *one* Degree of Perfection to *another*; and whilst *poor slavish* Souls that are acted mainly by their Fears, are fain to tug at the Oar, and yet creep on but slowly, and by *insensible* Degrees; we shall run forwards with Ease and Speed; and get more ground at *one* stroke, than they can in *twenty*. For in *one* good Action performed out of Love, there is more Virtue and Goodness, than in a *hundred* of those whereunto we are dragged by our own Fears and Terrors; because as the Degrees of *Evil*, so the Degrees of *Good* in all Actions, are to be measured by the Degrees of Will that are in them; and doubtless in those good Actions,

ons, that have Love for their Principle, there is much more of Will than in those that proceed from Fear and Terror; and consequently, our Nature being perfected by *good* Actions, and *more* or *less* perfected by them, the *more* or *less* of Goodness they have in them, must needs be much more perfected by the good Actions of Love, than by those of Fear. Whilst therefore we are acted in *Religion* by the Love of *God*, our Souls are upon the Wing to Perfection, and in a *swift* Tendency to the *heavenly* State; we are already in the Neighbourhood of *glorified* Saints and Angels; and if we continue our Course, shall soon be fit for their Society and Converse. This therefore is the *great* End and Reason why *God* doth so importunately claim our Love, because this of all others is the most *perfective* Principle of our Natures, and consequently the most *conducive* to our Happiness.

4ly. And lastly, from hence I infer, of what *vast* Importance it is to us in *Religion*, to love *God*. For you plainly see, that Love is not only a Principle of Obedience, but that of all others it is the most *efficacious* and *operative*; that it doth not only engage us to keep *God's* Commandments, but that it enables us to keep them most universally, and vigorously, and chearfully, and constantly.

stantly: So that what the *Apostle* saith of *brotherly Love*, is more universally true of the Love of God, *that it is the keeping of the whole Law*, Rom. xiii. 10. that is, causally and virtually it is. For so Love is that *universal Cause* which within its *fruitful Womb* contains all the Particulars of our Obedience, and is naturally productive of them all; So that virtually it is *all Religion*; it is *Godliness*, and *Temperance*, and *Charity*, and *Humility*, and *Righteousness*, and *Patience*; being the *common Cause* and Parent of them all. For Love hath an *universal Respect* to the Will of the Beloved; it doth not *chuse* what is *easy* and *refuse* what is *hard*, but likes what *God* likes, and disapproves of what he hates; his Will being the *great Reason* of all its Choices and Refusals; And whatsoever things in particular are *distastful* and *difficult* to us, by its *powerful Oratory* it renders *pleasant* and *easy*. For he that serves *God* out of Love, serves him with Delight; and he that serves him with Delight, hath no Clog to incumber him; none of those *Aversions* and *Antipathies* to his Service; that do so load and depress *unwilling Minds*; he doth not row against the Current of Nature, but acts with the *full Inclination* of his Mind, and so feels little or nothing of Drudgery in his *Religion*; and be-

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ing carried on with a *full* Tide of Delight, he goes easily and chearfully down with the Stream. Of such *vast* Importance is the Love of God to our *Religion*, that it not only produces it, but renders it *easy* and *pleasant*; so that without some Degree of *this*, our *Religion* can have neither Being nor Well-being; and it is as possible for us to live without a Soul, and to be nourished without Food, as it is for our *Religion* to be, and to thrive without the Love of God.

Wherefore if ever we would be *Religious* indeed, if ever we would *connaturalize* Religion to our Souls, so as to render it *easy* and *delightful* to us; let us endeavour to kindle this *heavenly* Fire within us; and certainly if we heartily endeavour it, we cannot fail of success. For there are so many *mighty* Reasons to engage us to the Love of God, so many *invincible* Attractions in his Nature, and in his Love towards us, as cannot but affect us if we seriously ponder and consider them. For how can I reflect upon that *amiable* Nature of his, in which there is an *harmonious* Concurrence of all Beauties and Perfections; where *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, *Justice* and *Mercy*, and every *lovely* Thing that can claim or deserve a *rational* Affection, are contempered together in their utmost Degrees of Perfection? How I say, can.

can I steadily reflect upon such a Nature as this, without being charmed and captivated with the Love of it? How can I think of that *stupendous* Love which he hath expressed towards me, in giving me my Being, and all the Blessings I enjoy; in preparing a *Heaven* of *immortal* Joys for me, and sending his *Son* from thence to conduct me thither, without being all inflamed with Love to him? Wherefore let us seriously set our selves to the Contemplation of *God*, of the Loveliness of his Nature, and of his *infinite* Kindness to us and all his Creation. Let us repeat the Thoughts of these Things upon our Minds, and never give over pressing our selves with those *infinite* Reasons we have to love him, till we feel the *heavenly* Fire begin to kindle within our Breasts; and then let us never give over feeding and blowing it with these *divine* Considerations, till it rise up into a *triumphant* Flame. And then we shall feel our selves animated with a *new* Soul, and inspired with so much Life and Activity in *Religion*, as that from our Experience we shall be able to subscribe to the Truth of the Text, *This is the Love of God*, this the most *natural* Expression and *inseparable* Effect of it, *That we keep his Commandments*.

I JOHN V. 3.

— And his Commandments are not grievous.

I Proceed now to the next Part of the Text, *viz.* the *Motive* by which this obedient Love of God is enforced ; and his Commandments are not grievous : *ex viis Baptistarum.* they are not heavy, or burthensome ; they have no such Weight or Difficulty in them, as ought in reason to discourage us from keeping them. For in these Words the *Apostle* seems to anticipate an Objection ; alas if this be the Love of God to keep his Commandments, what Man is able to love him ? for if his Commandments are not absolutely impossible, yet are they at least so extremely difficult, that scarce any Man can have the Courage to undertake the Performance of them. This, saith our *Apostle*, is a mighty Mistake, or a wretched Pretence for Mens Sloth and Idleness ; for verily and truly the Commands of God have no such Difficulty in them, but are in themselves very gentle and easie to be born. And with this Assertion our blessed Saviour doth most

most perfectly accord, *Mat. xi. 30. My yoke is easie, and my burthen is light.* And the Prophet *David* makes it not only *easie*, but *delightful*, *Pfal. xix. 8. The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoycing the heart; the Commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightning the eyes.* And then in the 10th Verse he tells us, that *they are more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold; and sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb.* So far they are from being Toils and Burthens, that in Reality they are Pleasures and Recreations. But farther to demonstrate this Truth to you, That *God's Commands are not burthensome and difficult*, I shall do these two things.

I. Shew you that they are *facile* and *easie* in themselves.

II. That *Christ* by what he hath done, hath rendred them much more *facile* than they are in themselves.

I. That the Commands of *God* are *facile* and *easie* in themselves: And this will evidently appear if we consider,

1. That whatsoever they enjoin hath some *natural Good* appendent to it.

2. That every Thing which they enjoin is highly *agreeable* to our *reasonable Natures*.

3. That They are all *perfective* of our *Natures*, and *conducive* to our *Happiness*.

4. That in themselves they are *plain* and *simple*, and *direct*, and have no Intricacies or Labyrinths in them.

5. That they are all so inseparably connected to *one another*, that they mutually promote and help forwards *each other*.

1. That whatsoever they enjoyn hath some *natural Good* inseparably appendent to it, to sweeten and endear it. The *great* and *wise* First-Mover hath so ordered Things in the Course of Motion which he hath established, that *such* and *such* Actions should be ordinarily attended with *such* and *such* Effects and Consequents; and this is one *great* Way by which he hath signified to the World his Dislike or Approbation of *humane* Actions by the Effects and Consequents which he hath chained and annexed to them. If in the Course of Things which he hath established, *such* an Action be ordinarily attended with a *good* Effect, he thereby signifies his Approbation of it, and declares that it is his Will and Pleasure that we should do and persevere in doing it: But if the Consequents which in the Course of Nature are ordinarily linked to such an Action are *evil* and *hurtful*, he thereby declares his Dislike and Abhorrence of it; and that it is his Will and Pleasure that we should carefully and
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constantly avoid it. For the *great* Author of our Beings hath so framed our Natures, and placed us in such Circumstances and Relations, that there is nothing *vicious* but is also *injurious* to us ; nothing *virtuous* but is *advantageous* ; and in this the *Good* and *Evil* of all *humane* *Virtues* and *Vices* do consist ; and 'tis purely for this Reason, why he forbids the *one* and commands the *other* ; because he is our Friend, and would not have us neglect any Thing that tends to our *Good*, nor do any Thing that is *hurtful* and *injurious* to us ; and because he knows that while we are thus framed, and do continue in these Circumstances and Relations, it is impossible but *Virtue* should be an Advantage, and *Vice* a Mischief to our Natures. And indeed the *great* Sanction of the *Law of Nature*, is nothing else but that *natural* *Good* and *Evil* which is ordinarily consequent to the Actions which it commands and forbids. For when *God* had no otherwise revealed himself to the World than only by the *established* Course and Nature of Things, that was the only *Bible* whereby Mankind could be instructed in his Will and Pleasure ; and there being no *Threats* or *Promises* antecedently annexed unto *bad* and *good* Actions, his Will and Pleasure concerning our doing or avoiding them, was

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only *visible* in those *good* or *bad* Effects and Consequences, which in the Course of Nature he had made necessary to them. And indeed the *Moral Good* and *Evil* of all Actions, is finally to be resolved into the *natural Good* and *Evil* that is appendent to them ; for therefore our Actions are *morally good*, because they are *naturally beneficial* to us ; and therefore are they *morally evil*, because they are *naturally prejudicial* and *hurtful* ; and those that are neither of these, are *indifferent* Actions ; and stand in the middle between *Good* and *Evil*. And indeed this Distinction of Actions by their Effects and Consequents, is in most Particulars so *plain* and *sensible*, that all the World hath taken Notice of it : For whereas all *good* Actions have an *apparent* Tendency either to the *Publick Good*, wherein our own *Private* is involved, or to our own *animal* and *sensitive Good*, our *Quiet*, and *Health*, and *Reputation*, and *Prosperity* ; or to the Perfection of our *rational* Natures, and the *sovereign Pleasure* and *Happiness* of our Minds ; all *bad* Actions tend directly contrary, either to the Damage and Ruine of the *Publick-Weal*, or to the Hurt and Prejudice of our *animal* and *sensitive* Felicity ; to the *diseasing* of our Bodies, the *staining* our Names, or the *impoverishing* our Estates ; or to the *defacing* and

and *blemishing* the Beauty of our *rational* Natures, and the Interruption and Disturbance of all the Pleasures and Felicities of our Minds. And this Distinction of *good* and *evil* Actions is so immutably fixed in the Nature of Things, that it can never be obliterated, until God wholly alters the Course of his Creation, and impresses quite contrary Laws of Motion on it. For so long as we continue what we are in the same Nature and Circumstances, and Relations to God and *one another*, *Righteousness* and *Godliness*, *Humility* and *universal Love* must necessarily be *good* for us; and their Contraries *bad* and *destructive* to our Happiness.

Now this *wise* and *excellent* Constitution of Things doth very much tend to the facilitating of *Virtue* and *Goodness* to us. For when Things are so constituted that it is become our Interest as well as our Duty to pursue *Virtue* and eschew *Vice*; when that which distinguishes our Duty from our Sin, is the *good* that it doth us, and the *apparent* Tendency it hath to our Happiness; this, if we love our selves, must needs very much endear and recommend it to us: For now we serve our selves in serving our Maker, the substance of all whose Injunctions is no more than this, that we should pursue *our own* Happiness by doing all those Things which

which are necessary thereunto. I confess had he made those Actions which are our Sins to be our Duty, we had then some Reason to complain ; for then we should have been bound in *pure* Obedience to God to damnify our selves ; and like the *wretched Priests of Baal*, to cut and slash *our own* Bodies and Souls meerly to humour and gratify the *Divinity* whom we adore ; then in obeying him we must have acted *our own* Tragedy, and made our selves *miserable* in *pure* Loyalty to our Maker. For there is such an *inseparable* Bane clings to all *vicious* Actions as necessarily renders them *destructive* and *venomous* ; and we may as soon clip off the Sun-beams with a Pair of Scissers, as separate Vice from its *mischievous* Consequences. But now when the Sum of all that God requires of us is to be *good* to our selves, and Friends to *our own* Happiness ; to do what is *beneficial*, and avoid what is *hurtful* to us ; when every Command of his is an Instance of his Love to us, and exacts nothing of us but what we would have done of *our own* Accord, had we but known what is *good* for us as well as he ; and loved our selves as well as he loves us : In a word, when at the End of every *good* Action there stands some *natural Good* beckoning and inviting us to it ; and at the End
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of every *bad* One some *natural Evil* to warn and affright us from coming at it ; so that we cannot run from any Duty into any Sin, without leaving a Benefit for a Mischiefe, and leaping out of some Degree of Happiness into some Degree of Misery : When things I say are thus, as it is apparent they are, with what Conscience can we complain that our Duty is *burthensome* and *uneasie* ? This therefore is one *great Reason* why God's Commands cannot be *grievous*, because they require nothing but what is *beneficial*, and forbid nothing but what is *hurtful* and *injurious* to us. And sure no Man can have Reason to complain, that is forbid Poyson, and commanded to eat nothing but what is *wholsome* and *nourishing*.

2^{ly}. Another Thing that facilitates the Commands of God is this, That they are highly *agreeable* to our *reasonable* Natures. And hence the Apostle calls the whole of our *Religion* a *reasonable Service*, Rom.xii.1. And for the Truth of this I dare appeal to any considering Man in the World, whether those *Virtues* which God hath enjoyned be not in their own Nature far more *reasonable* than any of the Contrary Vices ; whether (supposing there be a God that made and governs the World ; and from whom we derive our Beings, and all the Blessings
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we enjoy or expect) it be not much more *reasonable* in the Nature of the Thing, that we should *worship* and *revere*, and *love* and *honour*, and *obey* him, than that we should *neglect* and *despise*, *blaspheme* and *rebel* against him; or whether we can behave our selves so unworthily to One that hath deserved so well at our hands, without doing the *greatest* Violence to our own Reason; whether since we are all of us *reasonable* Beings, and our Reason is the *noblest* Ingredient of our Natures, it doth not much better become us to subject our *blind* Passions and Appetites, to those *eternal* Rules of Temperance which Right Reason prescribes, than to let loose the Reins to them, and suffer them to run headlong into all Excesses and Riots; whether since we are incorporated into the *great* Society of Mankind, it be not much more *conducive* to the *Good* of the Whole to behave our selves *justly* and *honestly*, *charitably* and *obliging* one towards another, than to *defraud* and *oppress*, *malign* and *persecute* one another. I dare appeal to any Man that hath ever thought twice of these Matters, whether in point of Reasonableness, the Advantage is not wholly on the side of Virtue; yea, and whether the *opposite* Vices compared with these Virtues, seem not as *extravagant* as the *wildest* Freaks of a *Mad-man*,
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compared with the *wise* Managements of a *Minister of State*. But I need not appeal to *particular* Men in this Matter, since all the *reasonable* World is agreed in the point, and the Men of all Ages and Nations, and Religions, how much soever in other points they have dissented from *one another*, yet in this have still been *unanimous*, That Virtue is the *wisest* and most *reasonable* Thing in the World, and Vice the most *absurd* and *irrational*; and this not only in the *general*, but in all those *particular* Instances of Virtue and Vice which *Christianity* commands and forbids. For excepting the two *Sacraments*, and believing in *Jesus Christ*, and the Observation of the *Lord's Day*, which are the *instituted* Means of our *Religion*, there is nothing made Matter of Duty to us, but what all the *wise* World had long before pronounced most highly *fit* and *reasonable*.

This therefore must needs render the Commands of *God* very *easy* to us, that they do so perfectly agree with our *reasonable* Natures, and require nothing of us either to be done or avoided, but what the Reason of every *wise* Man would have obliged him to, whether *God* had commanded it or no. So that now to *facilitate* our Duty, we have the *full* Concurrence of our Reason, which upon *due* and *impartial* Consideration cannot

not but approve and recommend it to us as the most *reasonable* Thing in the World ; and if it be so, how is it possible that it should be in its *own* Nature *grievous* ? Is it so *hard* a Matter for Men to act like Men, and not to live their own Reverse and *Antipodes* ? Is it such a *mighty* Burthen to comply with the most *genuine* Inclinations of our Nature, and to swim with the *full* Tide and Current of our Reason, in obeying those Commands which are so far from offering any Violence to our Faculties, that they have their *full* Consent and Approbation ? Let Men say and teach what they please, 'tis as apparent as the Sun, that the Difficulties of *Religion* commence not so much upon the Stock of Nature, as of Education and *evil* Habits and Customs ; for in all *other* Instances, that which is *natural* is always *facile* and *easy* ; and if Reason be the Nature of a Man, *Religion* must be either *natural* or *unreasonable*. So that *Religion* disagrees with us upon no *other* Account, but only because we disagree with our selves ; and it just so far crosses us, as we do the Current of *our own rational* Natures. We have *sophisticated* our Natures with the Intermixtures of *sensual* and *devilish* Habits, and they are these that the Commands of God do agrieve ; and so 'tis not the Man that is so burthened with

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Religion, but 'tis either the *Beast*, or the *Devil* that is in him.

3ly. Another Thing that facilitates God's Commands is this, That they are mightily *furthered* and *promoted* by all the *natural* *Instincts* and *Passions* of *human* Nature. There are *certain* *Propensions* in *human* Nature antecedent to all Reason and Discourse, that seem to be implanted in us by the *wise* Author of our Beings, for no *other* End but only to minister to *Virtue* and *Religion*; such in particular are *Self-Love*, the *Love of Truth*, and of *Pleasure*, *Commiseration* and *Gratitude*, and *Affectation of Praise*; all which do discover themselves in us in our *early* Infancy, before we are capable of discoursing our selves into them. For even in *young* Infants you may observe a great Inclination to defend themselves, and to repel Injuries, which proceeds from the Principle of *Self-love* that is in them; a *vehement* Desire of what seems good to them, and a *great* Displeasure when they perceive themselves deceived; the *latter* of which must proceed from their Love of Truth, as the *former* from their Love of Goodness. Again, when they see a *miserable* Object, or one whom they think so, they presently bemoan it, and express by their Actions a very *earnest* Desire to defend and relieve it; which proceeds from
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that *natural* Commiseration that is in them. Again, as soon as they are able to distinguish Faces and Persons, we see they express the *greatest* Love and Fondness to those that tend and feed them, and do them most good ; which is a *plain* Expression of their *natural* Gratitude. And as soon as they understand the Meaning of *Words* or *Actions*, they shew themselves highly pleased when they are *commended* and *applauded*, and much grieved and ashamed when they are *derided* and *exposed* ; which plainly discovers their *natural* Affectation of Praise. These and such like Instincts and Propensions there are found in *human* Nature, which being well managed and improved by our Reason, prove *excellent* Instruments of *Virtue* and *Religion* ; and do very much *facilitate* and further our Practice of them. For this our *natural* Self-love being guided by our Reason, doth strongly incline us to serve and obey *God*, who being the most *powerful* Agent in the World, can do us the *greatest* Good if we please him, and the *greatest* Hurt if we affront and provoke him ; so that as we love *our* selves, it concerns us to use all *reasonable* Ways to endear and reconcile our selves to him. Thus our *natural* Desire of *Good*, if conducted by our Reason, will incline us to do the best Actions, since
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from these the *greatest* Good will necessarily redound to us ; and our Love of Truth by *good* Management may be easily improved into Honesty and Sincerity, and an *universal* Abhorrence of Vice upon the Account of those *notorious* Cheats and Impostures that are in it. Thus also by the Bias of our *natural* Commiseration, we are strongly inclined to *Charity* and *Beneficence*, and *universal* Love ; and by its own *innate* Gratitude our Nature is propense to the Love of God, who is our *Sovereign* Benefactor ; to *honour* and *obey* our Parents, and do all the Acts and Offices of a *noble* and *generous* Friendship. And to name no more, thus by our *natural* Affectation of Praise we are strongly inclined to do *praise-worthy* Things, and consequently to exercise our selves in all those *amiable* Virtues, which by *common* Consent are lookt upon as the Graces and Ornaments of *human* Nature. Thus by all those Instincts that God hath implanted in our Natures, we are inclined to Virtue, and Obedience to his Will : And for this Reason chiefly hath he implanted them in us, because they are *excellent* Instruments of *Religion*, having in them such a *natural* Aptitude and Prone-ness to facilitate our Duty by inclining us to it, and to farther us in Holiness and Virtue. I confess, there are none of these Instincts

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but may be improved into Vices; nor is there any Thing so *good*, but what may be perverted to very *bad* Purposes: And if Men will abuse themselves, and willfully deboach the Instincts of their Nature, there is no Remedy for their Folly; and they must thank themselves when they feel the *dismal* Effects of it. But this I think is plain, that there are no Propensions in *human* Nature, but what are much more improvable into Virtue than into Vice; and if Men would but use themselves well, and as it becomes *reasonable* Creatures to do, they would doubtless find themselves very much farthered in their Duty by the *natural* Instincts which *God* hath implanted within them. And this is a *mighty* Advantage on Virtues side, that it is thus aided and assisted with all the Instincts of our Natures; which like *obedient* Handmaids, are most readily inclined to execute its Commands, and minister to its Pleasure and Interest. How then is it possible that *Religion* in it self should be *burthensome* and *grievous* to us, when the Propensions of our Nature do so fairly comply with it, and it is helped forwards and promoted by all their *united* Force and Influence? 'Tis difficult indeed for a Man to go against the Grain; but to act according to Nature, to follow *our own* Pro-

Propensions, and to do what we are inclined to by *natural* Instinct, is doubtless the *easiest* Thing in the World.

4th. Another Thing that makes those Virtues which *God* Commands to be *easie* is this, that they are all so inseparably connected to one *another*, that they mutually promote and help forward each *other*; For all the Virtues are so mutually concatenated, that the stirring of any *one* Link moves the whole Chain. Thus for Instance, the *true* Knowledge of *God* naturally inflames the Soul with the Love of him; and then the Love of him insensibly transforms her into the Image of his *beloved* Goodness; for he that loves *God* must needs be enamoured with that *divine* Goodness which is the Root of his Love: And while he is ravished with the Sweetness of his *Good* Will, the Underservedness of his Grace, and the Clemency of his Pardon, an *heavenly* Spirit steals into his Soul, and he loves, and becomes like *God* so both at once, that like a Wedg of Steel, he is transformed into the Likeness of the Fire that heats him; and is all *inflamed* and *inlightened* at the same Moment. And as he burns with Love, so he resembles the Goodness that set him on Fire, and becomes *pure* as that is *pure*, and *holy* as that is *holy*, and *just* and *merciful* as that *heavenly* Original

nal is which he copies and transcribes. Thus wheresoever the Love of God is, it hath all the *god-like* Virtues attending it ; and that being the *first* Link in the *heavenly* Chain, whensoever it moves, it communicates Motion to all the rest. For he that heartily loves God, will love those whom God loves ; and so the Love of God will draw *Brotherly-Charity* after it ; and he who loves those whom God loves, will be *just* and *righteous* in his Dealings and Deportment towards them ; and so *Brotherly-charity* will draw *Righteousness* after it : And he that demeans himself justly and righteously towards *others*, will neither undervalue them, nor overvalue himself ; and so *Righteousness* will draw *Humility* after it : And he that doth not overvalue himself, is fairly disposed to be sober in all his Passions ; and so *Humility* draws *Temperance* and *Sobriety*, and *Meekness* after it. Thus *one* Virtue smoothenes the Way to *another*, and makes it not only *possible* but *easie* ; for there is such a *near* Neighbourhood between these *heavenly* Sisters, that when we are arrived at one, we pass insensibly to the next ; and so on by Degrees, till we are gone round with them all. For though there be not an *immediate* Dependence of every Virtue upon every *one* Virtue, so as to make it necessary for a Man to have

have all Virtues in every Moment that he hath one ; for a Man may be *charitable*, and yet not presently *humble* ; as he may be *just*, and yet not immediately *temperate* : Yet there is so *near* a Dependence between them, that *one* always disposes the Mind for *another* ; this Virtue always makes way for its next Neighbour, and *that* for its next, and so on all around the whole Circle of Virtues. Thus *Humility* naturally disposes the Mind to *Meekness*, *Meekness* to *Charity*, *Charity* to *Justice*, *Justice* to *Devotion*, (which is giving God his Due) and *Devotion* to *Heavenly-mindedness* and *Contempt* of the World ; and so all along there is a *gentle* and *easy* Transition from *one* to *t' other*. Now this must needs mightily *facilitate* the Virtues of *Religion*, that they are so nearly confederated to each *other*, and so do naturally contribute to each others Assistance. For whereas if it were not for this there would still be the *same* Difficulty in practising the *second* Virtue as there is in practising the *first*, and in practising the *third* as there is in practising the *second*, and so every *single* Virtue would be equally difficult ; now the main Difficulty lies in the *first* we begin with, for by practising of *that* we shall be so well disposed for the *next*, that afterwards we shall go on with much more Ease and Pleasure ; for

the *first* Virtue being set a going, like the *First-moving Heaven*, will communicate its Motion from *Orb to Orb*, from *one* Virtue to *another*, till the whole *Sphere* whirls round in an *harmonious* Order. Thus all the Virtues you see do naturally lighten and ease one *another*, and every *one* contributes something to make every *one* more *ease*; so that had we but the Courage to begin to practise them, we should find they would every day grow more *ease* and *ease* to us, and that not only because we should be more and more Habituated to them, but because they being mutually allyed to one *another*, the stronger they grow the more vigorously they must farther and promote *each other*.

5^{ly}. And lastly, Another Thing that makes the Virtues that God hath commanded us *ease* is this, that in themselves they are *plain* and *simple* and *direct*, and have no Intricacies or *Labyrinths* in them. As for Sin and Wickedness it is an *inextricable* Labyrinth, in which the further a Man goes the more he will perplex and lose himself; it is a *boundless* Wilderness whose Paths do all thwart and cross *one another*. For all Vices consist in Extremes, and are either the *Excesses* or *Defects* of Virtue; so that there are *two* Vices to *one* Virtue, and both are Extremes thwart-

thwarting and running counter to *one another*. Now amidst this great Diversity and Contrariety of Vices the Sinner must needs be extremely amazed and distracted; for his Lusts are so *infinite* that he can see no End of them, they do so cross and interfere with *each other* that while he humours *one* he displeases *another*. For in gratifying his *Sordidness* he affronts his *Pride*, and in feeding his *Covetousness* starves his *Sensuality*; so that his *wretched* Soul wanders among *infinite* Cross-ways, and is miserably distracted by its own *contrary* Desires, which, like *Aeteons Hounds*, are continually worrying and tearing her in pieces. But all the Paths of Virtue lie strait forwards between the *vicious* Extremes, and like *Parallel Lines* do never interfere with *one another*; they never raise any *contrary* Desires, nor distract our Minds with *inconsistent* Passions; but all their Motions are *regular* and *uniform*, conspiring with and promoting *one another*. For the Truth of it is, Virtue is all but one *intire* Thing, much like the Center of a Circle, which though many Lines are drawn from it round about, and it is look'd upon sometimes as the Term of *this* Line, and sometimes of *that*, yet it is *one* Term to them all, and is in it self undivided: So is Virtue but one *intire* Perfection, though

it seem to be diversified in regard of the many Affections that it moderates, and the several Actions which it doth produce ; And though its Precepts and Actions are *many*, yet they are all ordained to *one* End, and in that they are united as well as in the Principle from whence they proceed. And upon this Account there can be none of those *perplexing* Intricacies in the Paths of Virtue as are ordinarily found in the Ways of Sin, because they are all of them *direct* and *strait*, leading from *one* Principle to *one* and the *same* End ; And the Principle and End of our Motion being *one*, 'tis impossible but our Designs, Desires and Pursuits should be *simple* and *uniform* ; and consequently the whole Force of our Souls being bent *one* Way, we must needs proceed with more Alacrity and Ease than we can possibly do when 'tis divided and dispersed among so *great* a Multiplicity of Ends and Objects as Vice proposes to us. So that here is one *great* Advantage that Virtue hath above Vice in respect of Easiness, that whereas almost in every *bad* Action a Man hath a *different* End, now to satisfy *this* Lust, and anon the *contrary* ; in every *virtuous* one his End is always the same ; and whereas the *former* acts variously and inconsistently, and his Desires frequently clash and run a tilt at

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one another ; the *later* always moves directly and uniformly, by *one* and the *same* Rule towards *one* and the *same* End. And whereas many Vices are in themselves full of Intanglements, Virtue is always *plain* and *open*, and *free*. As for Instance, how do we perplex and intangle our selves by *Lying* and *Knavery*, consuming the Pleasure of our Lives within a *winding* Maze of little Tricks and *intricate* Contrivances? And what *shameful* Retreats and *false* Colours, what *Fucus's* and *Daubings* are we feign to use to avoid Contradiction and Discovery? Whereas were we but *honest* and *sincere* in our Professions and Actions, our Way would be *open* and *easie*, and *uniform* ; wherein we might pursue all *our* Ends by the *directest* Means, and need never wander about in the Labyrinths of a *mysterious* Subtilty ; where we may walk without blushing in the Sight of the Sun, and in the View of the World, and have no Occasion to skulk into Coverts and Retirements. And the same may be said of *Ambition*, and *Covetousness*, and *Pride*, and *wandering Lust*, Vices that are usually full of great Intreagues and Mysteries ; whereas the *Contrary* Virtues are all *plain* and *simple* , and have nothing of Difficulty or Intricacy in them. This therefore is a great Advantage that Virtue hath in Respect

Respect of Ease, that it is *plain* and *uniform*, and *simple* and *direct*. And so I have done with the *first* Thing proposed, which was to shew you that God's Commands in themselves are *facile* and *easy*. I now proceed

2. To the second Thing, which is to prove that our *blessed Saviour* by what he hath done, hath render'd them much more *easy* than they are in themselves. Now there are these *Four* Things which our *Saviour* hath contributed to the *facilitating* the Commands of God.

1. The Assistance of his *Holy Spirit*.
2. The Influence of *his own* Example.
3. The *merciful* Indulgence and Condescension of his *Gospel* to the Weakness and Infirmary of our Natures.
- 4^{ly}. The *glorious* Rewards he hath promised us upon our *sincere* Obedience.

1. To the rendring of God's Commands *easy*, he hath contributed the Assistance of his *Holy Spirit*. For he hath promised to give his *Holy Spirit* unto every one that asks; and therefore though our Nature of it self be extremely *weak*, and not able of it self to stand under the *easy* Burthen of its Duty, if we will but struggle and do what we are able, he is engaged by promise not to suffer us to sink, For if by doing what we can,
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it is in our Power to engage him to enable us to do what we cannot, it is certainly in our Power to do all; for though in *our own* Strength we cannot do all, yet if we please, it may be in our Power to do more than all through him that will strengthen us, if we will but do what we can.

2ly. To the rendring of God's Commands *easy*, he hath also contributed the Influence of *his own* most *holy* Example. For by *his own* most *perfect* Obedience to the Commands of his Father, he hath not only set us a Copy to write after, but he hath also given us most *convincing* Evidence that our Obedience is both *possible* and *honourable*. That it is possible we see by what he hath done, and it is certain that what hath been done may be done; that it is *honourable* we see by his doing of it; for certainly so *great* a Person as the *Son of God*, would never have stooped to an *inglorious* Obedience. So that the Example of our *Saviour* not only encourages our Obedience, but crowns and dignifies it; and renders it a *fit* Object both of our Endeavour and Ambition: For by doing himself what he requires of us, he hath plainly demonstrated not only that it may be done, but also that it *highly* becomes us to do it. Thus the *glorious* Example of our *Saviour* whilst it directs our Obedience, doth
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at the same Time excite and encourage it. For he conversed among Men with a *modest* Virtue, such as was suitable to an *ordinary* Course of life. His *Piety* was *even, constant, and unblamable*; complying with *civil* Society, and a *secular* Conversation. It broke not forth into *high* Transports and *Seraphic* Expressions; but was such as was both *fit* and *easie* for Mortals to imitate. His Virtue consisted not in *prodigious* Fastings, or *high* Abstractions from Sense, but in a life of *Justice* and *Temperance, Humility* and *Charity, and Patience*; that is, in such a Life as was not only proper, but possible for us to lead. And by this Means he hath transmitted to us the more of an *imitable* Virtue; for he did not out-run the Capacities of Men in *prodigious* Expressions of Sanctity and Virtue; but complied with our Weakness, and kept pace with our Strength, that so he might entertain us all along with the Comforts of his Company, and the Influences of a *perpetual* Guide. And as that Rule of Faith which he hath propounded to us is fitted to our Understandings, being very *short, easie* and *intelligible*; so the Copy of Manners which he hath set before us is not only fitted with Excellencies *worthy*, but also with Compliances *possible* to be imitated. And therefore how efficaciously

oufly must such a *glorious* Example contribute to the *facilitating* the Commands of God to us, since it doth not only point us to our Duty, but also excite us to perform it ; and that both by its Condescension to our Strength and Capacity ; and by the *plain* Demonstration it gives, that our Duty is both *possible* and *honourable* ?

3dly. To the rendring of God's Commands *easy* to us, our *Saviour* hath also contributed the *merciful* Indulgence and Condescension of his *Gospel* to the Weakness and Imperfection of our Natures : For in his *Gospel* he hath mercifully considered our State, that we are but *frail imperfect* Creatures, that are very prone to act inconsiderately, and to be *ever* and *anon* surpris'd in this *great* Hurry of Temptations ; and therefore in his *holy Gospel* he hath made Provision for us accordingly, that is, he hath proportioned our Burthen to our Strength, and taken the Measure of our Duty by our Capacities. For all that he hath required of us as the Condition of our *eternal* Salvation is only this, that we should honestly endeavour to understand what he commands and forbids us, and that we should not live in the *wilful* Neglect of any *known* Duty, or in the *wilful* Commission of any *known* Sin ; and if we do this he hath engaged himself to make
such

such a *merciful* Abatement for our Infirmities and Inadvertencies, and Follies and Surprises, that they shall never rise in Judgment against us so as to exclude us from *eternal* Happiness. So that now there can be nothing our Duty that is *naturally* impossible, nothing *necessary* to our *eternal* Happiness that is *morally* impossible; that is, that cannot reasonably be expected from us, considering our State and Circumstances; and what is neither of these cannot be supposed to be very *grievous* and *burthensome*. For unless we account it *hard* that we are not left at Liberty to be *obstinate* Rebels to our God and Saviour, and with an *audacious* Forehead to reject what they command, and pursue what they forbid, it is certain there can be no such Thing as a Burthen or Grievance in all our *Religion*.

4thly. And lastly, To the rendring of God's Commands *easie* to us our Saviour hath contributed the Promise of a *glorious* Reward upon Condition of our *sincere* Obedience: And this is such a *vast* Contribution to the Ease of our Duty, as is *sufficient* to turn it all into *Jubilee* and Recreation. For when I seriously consider that after I have spent a *few* Moments here in the *noble* Exercises of a sincere Piety and Virtue, I shall be translated into a Region of *immortal*

tal Pleasures, where, in the Society of my God and Saviour, of Angels and of blessed Spirits, I shall spend an Eternity in one continued uninterrupted Act of rapturous Love and Joy and Pleasure ; where, in a perfect Freedom from all the Arrogancies of Flesh and Blood, and from all the Vexations of an ill-natured World, I shall live as happily for ever as all the Joys of an everlasting Heaven can make me ; in a word, where I shall have nothing else to do, but to converse with the most happy Lovers, and to bear a part in that ravishing Consort of Praises and Hallelujahs, wherewith they laud and celebrate the Fountain of all their Happiness : I say when I consider these Things, methinks I am enabled by those glorious Hopes and Expectations to scorn and despise all Difficulties, and, if need require, even to embrace the Flames of Martyrdom : But as for those gentle Toils of watching and praying, of keeping a constant Guard upon my self and contending against the Stream of my own depraved Inclinations ; Lord ! how inconsiderable they appear to me ; And how heartily do I pity those miserable crest-fallen Souls that tamely suffer themselves to be frightened out of Heaven by such harmless Scare-crows. Thus while I stand on the Tiptoes of my Hope, and see Heaven at my
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Journeys End, I over-look all Rubs and Hardships in my Way, and pass on triumphantly without minding them. And indeed when the *Reward* of our Obedience is so great, so infinitely transcending the Desert of it, I am astonished to think that ever any reasonable Being should be so shameless and immodest, as to take any Notice of those trifling Difficulties that are in it : For with what Conscience can we account any Thing hard, the Reward whereof is a Crown of immortal Glory ? How can our Voyage be troublesome, when our Port is the *Indies* of Pleasure ? No, no ; the Work can never be hard that hath *Heaven* for its Wages, the very Prospect whereof is enough to reconcile us to all the Difficulties in the Way to it, and to carry us through them not only with Ease but with Triumph. For he that hath *Heaven* for his Haven must be infinitely peevish if he quarrels at a rough Sea, and doth not bless the Storms and Winds that are driving him thither.

And thus I have proved to you at large that the Commands of *God* are not grievous, and that both because they are *easy* in their own Nature, and are made much more *easy* by our *Blessed Lord and Saviour*.

But after all that hath been said, I do foresee a material Objection that will be made

made against this Discourse, and that is this; That it contradicts the *universal* Experience of Mankind. For do not the Generality of those Men that have attempted a *religious* Life find by Experience a great deal of difficulty? Are they not forced to *strive* and *wrestle* with themselves, and to do the *greatest* Violence to their *own* Inclinations? Are they not forced to keep themselves under a *severe* Discipline, to pray earnestly, and watch diligently to prevent the Surprises and IncurSIONS of those Temptations that continually *way-lay* them wheresoever they are, and whatsoever they are about? And do they not many times find the difficulties so *great*, as that they are quite beaten off and utterly disheartned by them?

All this I confess is very true, and may very well be so without any Prejudice to the Argument in hand; for we have not been discoursing of what *Religion* may accidentally be, but of what it really is in it self. The Light in it self is *pleasant* to the Eye, but yet it may accidentally be *grievous* if the Eye be *sore* or *weak*, and not able to endure its Splendor. And so *Religion*, though in its self extremely *easy*, yet it may and often doth become accidentally *difficult* to us, by Reason of those *sinful* Prejudices against it which we do too often contract in the

Course of a *sinful* Life But 'tis an *unreasonable* Thing for Men to measure the Easiness of God's Laws not by their own *intrinsic* Nature, but by the Reluctancy and Opposition which they find in their *own* Hearts against *them*. For to a Man in a *Fever* every Thing is *bitter*, but yet the Bitterness is not in the Honey he tastes, but in the Gall that overflows his *own* Palate. And so to a *vicious* Man every Virtue is a Burthen, but the Burthenfomness is not so much in the Virtue as in his *own* Repugnancy to bear it. For I have already proved at large that *Religion* is every way agreeable to *humane* Nature, and therefore there can be no *other* Reason why it should not agree with us, unless it be that we disagree with our selves. We spoil *our own* Natures and do degenerate from the *humane* Nature into the *brutal* or *diabolical*; and what wonder is it that the *Religion* of a Man should be a Burthen to the Nature of a *Beast* or a *Devil*? But if we would take but a *little* Pains to retrieve our selves and weed out those *unnatural* Habits with which our Nature is over-grown, we should find that our *Religion* and *That* would very well accord, and then that which is our Burthen would become our Recreation. I confess before this can be accomplished, we must take a *great* deal of
Pains

Pains with our selves; we must *watch* and *pray*, and *strive* and *contend*, and *undergo* the severe Discipline of a *sorrowful* Repentance, if ever we mean to recover our Natures again. But for God's sake consider Sirs, there is now no Remedy for this, and you may thank your selves for it; for you must undergo *great* Difficulties, take which side you please. If you resolve to continue as you are, you must be most *wretched* Slaves to your *own* Lusts; you must tamely submit to all their *tyrannical* Commands, and run and go on every Errand they send you; and though they countermand *each other*, and *one* sends you *this* Way, and *another* the quite *contrary*; though *Sloth* pulls you back, and *Ambition* thrusts you forwards, and *Covetousness* bids you save, and *Sensuality* bids you spend; though *Pride* bids you strut, and *Flattery* bids you cringe, and there is as great a Confusion in their Wills and Commands as there was in the Language of the *Brick-layers of Babel*; and though in such a Huddle of Inconsistencies you are frequently at your Wits end, and know not what to do, yet you must be contented to endure the Hurry, and if you cannot do all at once, you must do what you can; and when you have done so, 'tis a thousand to one but there will be as many of your Lusts

dissatisfied as satisfied : And in the mean time while you are thus hurried about in the Crowd of your *own sinful* Desires, your *wretched* Conscience will ever and anon be alarming you with its *ill-boding* Horrors, and griping and twinging you with many an *uneasie* Reflection. Thus like *miserable* Gally-Slaves you must tug at the Oar, work against Wind and Tyde, and row through the Storms and Tempests of your *own* Conscience; and all this to run your selves upon a Rock, and invade your *own* Damnation. So that considering all, I dare say the Toil of being wicked is much more insupportable than that of a *holy* Life; and which is sad to consider, it hath no *other* Issue but *eternal* Ruin; *for the wages of Sin, saith the Apostle, is death*, Rom. vi. 23. And methinks it should be very uncomfortable for a Man to work so hard for nothing but Misery, and even to earn his Damnation with the sweat of his Brows; especially considering, that the Toil and Drudgery of a *sinful* Life hath no End. For though Custom and Habit renders all *other* Things *easeie*, yet by accustoming our selves to do *Evil*, we add to our Toil and render those *cruel* Taskmasters, our Lusts, more *tyrannical* and *imposing*; for still the more we gratify them, the more craving they will be, and the more impatient

ent of denial, and so by working for them we shall but increase *our own* Toil, and still acquire new Degrees of Labour and Drudgery. But as for the *main* Difficulty of *Religion*, it chiefly lies in the Entry to it ; for there we must shake hands with all our *darling* Lusts, and bid them adieu for ever ; and to persuade our selves thoroughly to this is the *main* Difficulty of all ; for then, to be sure, they will cling fastest about us, and use their *utmost* Oratory to stagger our Resolution, and the *old* Love we have born them, and the *dear* Remembrance of the Pleasures which they have administered to us will make our Hearts relent and our Bowels yearn towards them. But if with all those *mighty* Arguments wherewith our *Religion* and our Reason furnishes us, and all those *divine* Assistances which we are encouraged to ask, and if we do, are assured to obtain, we can but conquer our Reluctancies, and heartily persuade our selves to part with them ; this is the *sharpest* Brunt in all our *spiritual* Warfare ; for now if we do but keep the ground that we have gotten, and maintain our Resolution against the Temptations that assault it, our Lusts will every day grow *weaker* and *weaker*, and that *Pleasure* and *Ease*, that *Tranquility* of Mind and *Peace* of Conscience which we shall feel

accruing to us out of the Discharge of our Duty, will by Degrees so indear and *con-naturalize* it to us, that at last it will be much *harder* for us to sin than to obey. Wherefore let us stand no longer, like *naked Boys*, shivering upon the Brinks of *Religion*, wishing that we were in, but afraid to venture ; but let us consider *seriously*, resolve *sincerely*, and then leap in *boldly*; and though at first we may find it *difficult* to swim against the Stream, and stem the Tyde of *our own bad* Inclinations ; yet if we can but hold out courageously a while, we shall feel the Current slacken by Degree still the Tyde of Nature turn, and run the contrary Way ; and then we shall be carried on with Ease and Delight, and swim chearfully and pleasantly down with the Stream. For when once we have conquered the *bad* Inclinations of our Nature, *Religion* will be a *mighty* Ease and Refreshment to us, and we shall feel a thousand times more Pleasure and Satisfaction in it than ever we did in all our *sinful* Enjoyments ; so that then we shall find the Truth of the Text, and be able to pronounce from *our own* Experience, that *God's Commandments are not grievous*.

PSALM CXIX. 68.

Thou art good, and thou dost good.

I Have been discoursing concerning the Necessity of our loving of God in order to our being truly *Religious*, and shewed you at large that this is not only the great Principle of all *Religion*, but that of all others it is the most *fruitful* and *operative*. And now that I may lay this Foundation of true Religion in you, I shall explain to you the *infinite* Cause and Reason that we have to love him; and because Goodness is the Beauty of a *reasonable* Nature, and Beauty is the Object of Love, I shall endeavour to demonstrate to you the *infinite* Goodness of God, that I may thereby affect you with his Beauty; and if possible, inflame all your Souls with the Love of him. And that I may the more fully convince you of the *divine* Goodness, I shall endeavour to prove it from four distinct Topicks: 1. From the Nature of God; 2ly. From the Creation of God. 3ly. From the Providence of God: And 4ly. From the Revelations he hath made to the World. And these I intend shall be

the Arguments of *four* distinct Discourses ; the three first of which lie plainly in the Text, *Thou art good, and thou dost good.*

Thou art good : That plainly denotes what God is in himself, that he is *naturally and essentially good* ; that he is of a most *loving, kind, and benevolent* Nature, and hath a most *vehement* Propension to do good to others founded in his *immutable* Being. *Thou dost good* : that denotes the Exercise and Outgoing of this his *essential* Benevolence in the Works of his Creation and Providence ; and that this his *natural* Propension to do good is not at all *sleepy or unactive*, that it is not a *lazy and restive* Woulding or Volition ; but that it always *sallies* forth into Action, and doth most vigorously exercise it self either in making of Objects to imploy it self about, or in upholding and governing them when they are made. So that the Words contain these two things :

1. What God is in himself ; *Thou art good.*

2ly. What he is in those Actions that are determined without himself ; *Thou dost good.*

1. I begin with the first of these, What God is in himself. *Thou art good*, i.e. Thou art so *essentially*, and according to the *unalterable* Propension of thy Nature. And this,

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as I told you, I shall in the *first* Place endeavour to demonstrate from the Nature of God, that is, from that *intire* Complexion of all *possible* Perfections whereof his Nature is composed. For in Order to our handling of this Argument, *this* must be premised, that God is a Being endowed with all *possible* Perfections, and consequently thereunto that he is infinitely *powerful* and infinitely *wise*; and consequently to *that* that he is infinitely *Happy*; and consequently to this, that he loves himself infinitely; and that all this is so, is very evident from the Nature of the Thing. For first we must necessarily suppose one *Original Cause* of all Things; for else we can give no *possible* Account how those Things, that once were not, could ever come into Being; and we must also as necessarily suppose that this *Original Cause* was *Self-originated*, i. e. that it received its Being and Existence from none but it self; for else it cannot be the *Original Cause*, but must it self be the Effect of some *other Cause* that was in Being before it: That existing of it self without *any Cause*, it is infinitely removed from *Not-being*; for that which is without *any Cause* can ever be without *any Cause*, meerly from that *exuberant* Fulness of Essence that is in it self. And that which can be for ever without any Cause

Cause must necessarily be so, because this is a most *neccessary* Act, and as such must be exerted *ad extremum virium Agentis*; consequently to which we must also suppose, that *that* which is infinitely removed from *Not-being* hath the *utmost* Perfection of Essence in it. For the Notion of Essence, nakedly considered, is *to be*; and therefore by how much the more *remote* any Essence is from *Not-Being*, by so much the more perfect it must necessarily be. Again, in Consequence to this we must also suppose, that *that* which hath in it self, without any Cause, the *utmost* Perfection of Essence, must have in it self also the *utmost* of all *other* Perfections that by way of *Adjunct* or *Attribute*, such an *inexhaustible* Essence is capable of; that is, that it must be *Powerful* and *Wise*; and whatsoever else is a possible Perfection of Essence. For Plenitude of Essence consists in being as much as it can be; and so long as *any* Being is capable of being any more than it is, it hath not all the *possible* Degrees of Essence in it; for every Perfection, that Essence by way of *Attribute* is capable of, is a Degree of *positive* Entity. Thus *Wisdom* and *Power* are not *meer* Privations of *Weakness* and *Folly*, but Things that have some Degree of *real positive* Essence in them, and consequently what Being soever hath

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not these, must necessarily have it in some Degrees of *Not-Being*; and 'tis impossible that any Essence should be infinitely removed from *Not-Being*, which hath any Degree of *Not-Being* in it. Lastly, consequently to this we must also suppose, that a Being endowed with all possible Perfections, being infinitely *Powerful* and infinitely *Wise*, must needs be infinitely *Happy*; for wheresoever those great Perfections are, they must necessarily supply whatsoever is necessary to an infinite Happiness: And then from hence it necessarily follows, that a Being that is thus infinitely *Happy* must needs infinitely love and delight in it self; because within the vast Circumference of its own Being, it hath every Thing that it needs, desires, or affects. These are all plain and easy Deductions, and seem as naturally to follow from one another, as the most immediate Consequences do from *First Principles*. This therefore being supposed, which you see is very reasonable, that God is infinitely *Powerful*, and *Wise*, and *Happy*; and that because he is so, he loves himself infinitely; I doubt not but from each of these it will naturally follow, that he is also infinitely good and benevolent.

1. He is infinitely *powerful*; and therefore he is *good*. For Power is nothing but an Ability to act; and Action is the End of all
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all Ability for Action : So that the greater any Power is, the farther it must necessarily be removed from Inactivity ; and consequently *infinite* Power must be so infinitely removed from it, that it cannot be supposed to exist without Exercise ; or if it could, yet it cannot be imagined that *any* Being, in whom *infinite* Power exists, should determine with it self, that the *best* Use it could make of *that* Power, were to make no Use of it at all ; because such a Being can with as much Ease to it self, act as not act. And therefore since every Being doth necessarily delight in the Exercise of its *own* Perfections, it cannot be supposed but a Being infinitely *powerful* should necessarily delight in the Exercise of its Power, when it can as easily exercise it as suffer it to sleep on in *eternal* Inactivity ; and consequently when it can exercise its Power *more* vigorously as easily as *less*, and can do *more* Things as easily as *fewer*, it must necessarily chuse to do it ; because, as the having of Power inclines the Agent to act, so the having of *more* Power inclines it to act *more* vigorously. Wherefore if the doing of *Good* to *others* be a much *greater* Exercise of Power than the doing of *Evil*, it will hence necessarily follow, that *God* being infinitely *powerful* must be infinitely prone to do *Good* ; because he cannot but be

be delighted in *that* whereby this *great* Perfection of his Nature is most vigorously Exercised. But now for *God* to chuse to imploy his Power in doing *Mischief* to *others* rather than *Good*, would be to chuse to do *less* rather than to do *more*, when *both* are equally easy to him ; and consequently to lay a *needless* Restriction upon the Exercise of his Power ; and so far to render it *useless* and in *vain*. For in doing *Mischief* to *others*, he must be supposed either wholly to *annihilate* them, or to make them *miserable*, and continue them so ; but by doing *Good* to *others*, he must be supposed either to uphold them in those Beings he gave them, or to perfect those Beings ; and thereby to render them as *happy* as their Capacities will bear : And certainly to do either of the *later* is a much more *vigorous* Exercise of Power, than to do either of the *former*. For, for *God* to *annihilate* Beings, or reduce them to Nothing, is rather to withdraw his Power from them than to exercise it upon them ; because that which is not of it self, cannot continue to be of it self, it being in the Nature of the Thing as possible for a Thing to be of it self in the *first* Moment of its Existence, as to be of it self in any Moment of its Duration. So that the Continuance of our Being, and the Original
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of it must necessarily be owing to the *same* Power; and consequently, as our Continuance in *Not-Being* must necessarily have followed upon the *Non-exercise* of *this* Power, so our Relapse into *Not-being* must as necessarily follow from the Discontinuance of the Exercise of *this* Power. So that to our *Annihilation* there needs no more than the bare Suspension of the Exercise of *Almighty* Power upon us, or a ceasing to uphold us in Being; for to the upholding us in Being, there is required a *continued* Exertion of that *creative* Power that first brought us into Being; for if we can exist of our selves *this one* Moment, we might as well have done so the Moment *before*, and may as well do so the Moment *after*; and so *backward* and *forward* to all *Eternity*. So that unless we had such an *exuberant* Fulness of Essence in us as to exist of *our selves* from all *Eternity past* to all *Eternity to come*, we cannot exist so much as *one* Moment without *new* Supplies of Being from that *infinite* Fountain whence we were originally derived; and that we are *this* Moment, is as much the Effect of God's Power, as that we were *that* Moment when we *first* came into Being. So that whereas by *annihilating* us God would chuse to exercise no Power at all, that is, to render *his own* Omnipotence *useless* by giving
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it a *Quietus* from Action; by upholding us in Being his Power is still as vigorously exercised about us as it was in the *first* Moment of our Creation; and therefore by *how much* more *suitable* it is to *infinite* Power to *act* than to be *idle*, by so much more *suitable* to it it must necessarily be to uphold us in *our* Beings, than to *annihilate* and destroy us.

And then for making us *miserable* and continuing us so, it is a much *less vigorous* Exercise of Power than to perfect our Beings, and thereby to render us *happy*. And verily should God turn the whole World into one *intire* Globe of *unquenchable* Fire, and continue its *wretched* Inhabitants for ever weltring in its Flames, I should not look upon this as so *great* an Act of *Omnipotence* as it is to perfect our *rational* Nature so as to render it immutably and eternally *happy*. For to the making of any Being *perfect* and *happy*, there is required many *more* Causes and many *more* Acts than there is to the making them *miserable*. For the *greatest* Part of Misery consists in the Privation of Happiness, and for God to deprive his Creatures of Happiness is not so much the Exercise as Non-exercise of his Power; for then he deprives us of it when he ceases to do any Thing for us, and refuses to produce or
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to contribute to the producing of what tends to *our* Happiness: So that this Part of Misery consisting in a *mere* Privation is not so properly the Effect of the Exercise of Power, as of the Suspension of the Exercise of Power. So that unless we can suppose that the *Omnipotent* Creator of the World chuses rather not to act than to act, we must necessarily suppose that he chuses rather to bestow Happiness on his Creatures, than to deprive them of it. And as for the *positive* Part of Misery which consists in Pain and Torment, I dare appeal to any Man whether it be not much more *easie* to vex and torment any Being than it is to render it *happy*. For even a Child can put a Man, yea an *Elephant* to Pain; but to make a *sick* Man *well*, a *poor* Man *prosperous*, a *mad* Man *sober*, or a *Fool* *wise*, are such *mighty* Things as do most commonly transcend all *humane* Power whatsoever. But then to retrieve such *imperfect* Beings as we from the Bondage of Sense and Sensuality, and from being almost *Beasts* to raise us up by Degrees to an *equal* Height with *Angels*, to fill and thereby enlarge the *narrow* Capacities of our Natures till by filling they are widened almost to Infinity, and yet still to supply them with *new* Degrees of Happiness proportionable to their *vast* enlargements, is a Work
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that highly deserves to be the *eternal* Exercise of Omnipotence it self.

Since therefore the End of Power to act is Action, and every Thing naturally inclines to its End, and consequently the *greater* the Power of any Being is, the *greater* is its Inclination to Activity; and since the doing of *Good* to *others* is a much *greater* Exercise of Power than the doing of *Mischief*; it hence necessarily follows, that *God* being *Omnipotent* must thereby be infinitely inclined to do *Good*, and that because doing *Good* is infinitely the *largest* Sphere of Activity. So that if when 'tis equally *possible* and *easie* for him to do *Good*, as not, he should chuse not to do it, he would chuse directly contrary to the *necessary* Inclination of an Omnipotent Being, which is to do that which is the *greatest* Exercise of Power.

2ly. *God* is infinitely *Wise*, and therefore he is *Good*. For the *greatest* Wisdom consists in proposing the *worthiest* Ends, and chusing the *properest* Means to obtain them. Wherefore if doing *Good* to *others* be the *worthiest* End that *God* can propose to himself, it will necessarily follow that by the Infinity of his Wisdom he is inclined to do *Good*. For as his Power inclines him to act, so his Wisdom inclines him to act for the *worthiest* End; but doing *Good* to *others*

is evidently the *worthiest* End that God can be supposed to aim at; for it cannot be imagined that he can design any further Good to himself, any *new* Addition to the *vast* Treasure of his Happiness; which is so infinitely full that it can admit of no Increase: So that whatsoever he doth besides the enjoying of himself, he cannot be supposed to do for any *Self-end*; because he hath all that Good already within himself that he can possibly either desire or aim at. So that all those Actions of God which are terminated without *himself*, must have either no End at all, which cannot be supposed of the Actions of an *All-wise* Agent; or else they must have for their End either the Happiness or the Misery of others; but to make the Misery of *others* their End is by no Means consistent with his infinite Wisdom. For to make *pure abstracted* Evil the End of Action is so far from being infinitely *wise*, that 'tis impossible; because the very Notion of an End necessarily includes Good in it, either *real* or *apparent*; but God can reap no Good from the Misery of *others*, because he is infinitely *happy* already; and to be sure *others* can reap no Good from that which God intends to be their Misery; that *that* therefore should be God's End which is no End, which hath nothing of the Nature of an End

End in it, implies a *plain* Contradiction. So that to say that the End of God's Actions is the Misery of *others*, is all one as to say he acts for no End at all; and how an infinitely *wise* Agent can be said to act at *Reverses*, to do Things without any *Level* or *Aim*, I cannot apprehend. But supposing it were possible that *pure Evil* might be an End, yet it is as evident as the Sun that it cannot be the End of *infinite* Wisdom; for *infinite* Wisdom necessarily inclines to do that which is *wisest*; but if it were in it self *indifferent* to the *Almighty* whether he did *Good* or *Evil* to *others*, yet his *infinite* Wisdom would incline him to do *Good*; because in the doing of *Good* there is much more Wisdom exercised, than in the doing of *Evil*. For what *great* Skill doth it require in an *Almighty* Agent to make *others* miserable? If it hath a mind to turn them out of Being, 'tis but withdrawing that *Almighty* Arm that upholds them, and they will presently sink into Nothing of their own Accord; but what great Wisdom is there in it, thus to unravel his *own* Workmanship, to weave a *Penelope's Web*, and to *do* and *undo* eternally? And if he hath a Mind to make them *miserable* and continue them so, it is but suspending his own *Almighty* Influence, and refusing to concur to their Happiness, and they

will soon be as *miserable* as Misery can make them. I confess to invent an *acute* Torture requires some Skill ; but yet we plainly see that a very *little* Wit joyned with a *great* deal of Malice and Cruelty is sufficient to make an *exquisite* Tormentor ; since even Men of very *ordinary* Understanding have invented as *sharp* Torments as Men are able to bear. So that for God to do *Evil* requires very *little* Contrivance, and consequently is so far from being an Exercise *worthy* of his *infinite* Wisdom, that not only a *finite* but a very *shallow* Understanding, armed with *sufficient* Power and Malice, can invent and inflict as *exquisite* Tortures as is possible for any Being to bear. But to the *perfecting* of Beings and rendring them *happy*, especially of *free* and *rational* Beings, there is required a *long* series of *rare* and *admirable* Contrivance ; for to the effecting of this *noble* End, there are so many Impediments to be removed, so many *concurrent* Means to be employed, such an *incomparable* Skill required in the Choice of such as are most *fit* and *effectual*, and *methodizing* them into such a *regular* Connexion with, and Dependence upon *one another*, as that they may all successively *second* and promote *each other* , that even the Wisdom of God, how *infinite* so ever it be, may here find
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Scope and Matter enough to employ and exercise it self for ever. And I dare appeal to any *reasonable* Man whether in that Method of *saving* Souls which God hath revealed to us in his *Gospel*, (though yet we cannot see all, because we are not able to discern the *admirable* Connexion it hath with the *whole* series of *divine* Providence) there be not infinitely *more* Wisdom and *rare* Contrivance, than an *Omnipotent* Being need to imploy in effecting the *greatest* Mischief imaginable; whether in the contriving of Laws so *suitable* to, and *perfective* of our Nature, and in the composing such *unanswerable* Reasons and Motives to press and engage us to the Observance of them; and in all that *admirable* Series of Providences, by which he *seconds* and forces those Reasons, he hath not exercised incomparably more Wisdom than he could have done in effecting the *greatest* Evil in Nature. As for Example, suppose he should have designed to kindle some mighty *unquenchable* Flame in some *dark* and *dismal* Recess of the World, with a Resolution to hurl all *reasonable* Beings into it, without any Respect or Consideration; this doubtless would have been as *great* a Mischief as can well be imagined; but what Contrivance doth it ask for an *Almighty* Being to accomplish such a *direful* End?

Could not he have roasted a *little* World of Worms, and tortured a Company of Beings that are not able to resist him, without employing *infinite* Wisdom in the Management and Contrivance of it? Or, Which will as well serve my Argument, could there have needed as much Wisdom to design and effect *this*, as there did to contrive and manage the great Methods of our Salvation? Sure no man can be so senseless as to imagine it. Well then, if God be infinitely Wise, and Doing the *greatest* Good to *others* be a much *higher* Exercise of Wisdom than doing the *greatest* Evil, it will hence necessarily follow, that even his *infinite* Wisdom must needs incline him to do Good. For as the End of Power is to act, so the End of Wisdom is to act wisely; and every Thing, as I told you, inclines to its End, and consequently the more Wisdom it hath, the more wisely it is inclined to act: Wherefore since doing Good is the *greatest* Act of Wisdom, God, who is infinitely *wise*, must needs be infinitely inclined there unto.

3th. God is infinitely *happy*, and therefore he is *good*: for God's *infinite* Happiness doth necessarily exclude all Want, all Desire, and all Prospect of any Degree of Happiness beyond what he enjoys; and where all these are excluded there can be no *Self-end*: For

a *Self-end* is some *Good* desired and aimed at, which yet we are not possessed of; and if God hath no *Self-end*, he can have no End at all, but only to do *Good* to others. But perhaps you will object, how can you say that God hath no *Self-end*, when the *Scripture* so plainly tells us that *his own Glory* is his End, and this End he doth as well obtain by doing *Hurt* as by doing *Good* to others; by damning of *some*, as well as by saving of others? To which I answer, that if by the *Glory* of God you mean any Thing else but the free Communication of his Goodness to others, it is false to say that *his Glory* is *his End*; and if this be *his Glory*, then what I said is infallibly true, that the only End of God is to do *Good*. But if you think that his *Glory* consists in being praised and commended, admired and applauded by his poor impotent Creatures, you have very mean Conceptions of him, if you think that this is his last End. For what Advantage is it to God, that we applaud and commend him? Can the Praises and Panegyrics of a small Handful of Breath either make him more glorious than he is, or more glorious in his own Esteem? Alas! No; He is an infinite Stage and Theater to himself, his Prospect being every way adequate to his Glory, and his Glory as unbounded as Eternity it self: So that

if all his Creation should joyn Hearts and Voices to extol and laud him, yet they could not add either *one* Spark to his Glory, or *one* Degree to that *infinite* Satisfaction he takes in it. So that when we have praised him as much as we are able, he is still but as *glorious* as he was before, and he still knows that he deserves infinitely more Praises than we are able to render him. And how can it be imagined that he who is so infinitely *satisfied* with himself, and hath such *infinite* Reason for it, should find any need of our *poor* Praises and Commendations? And if he finds no Need of it, how can he propose it to himself as the End of his Actions, since the End of Action is always some *Good*, which yet we have not, but do desire to enjoy? 'Tis true he doth command us to *praise* and *laud* and *acknowledge* him, but he commands us *this* as he doth all *other* Things, not for *his own* Good, but for *ours*. He bids us extol and admire his Perfections, that by *that* he might engage us to transcribe and imitate them, and so by glorifying *him* to glorify *our* selves; So that still the Glory that he designs and aims at consists not in receiving any *Good* from us, but in doing and communicating of *Good* to us. And therefore though it is *true* that God doth obtain this *great* End of his Glory as well in
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damning of *some* as in *saving* of *others*, it is not because he reaps any *Good* from it, but because he doth *Good* by it. For if he should *damn* and *punish* any Being without any *good* Reason, he could not expect so much as to be praised and commended for it; but if he doth it for *good* Reason, it is because it is *good* either for *himself* or *others*: For *himself* it cannot be, for how can an infinitely *happy* Being reap any Degree of *Good* from *another's* Misery and Punishment? And therefore it must be for the *Good* of *others*, that they by the Example of those whom he punishes may be warned from incurring those Sins for which he punishes them, and from running away from *their own* Duty and Happiness. So that even the End of Punishment is to do *Good*, and this is the *great* Glory that *God* aims at in doing it. And indeed considering that *God* is infinitely *happy*, there is no *other* Glory but this that he can propose as the *great* and *ultimate* End of his Actions. For all the Inclination that is in any Being either not to do *Good*, or to do *Hurt* to *others*, arises from Indigence and Insufficiency; either we envy or we covet the *Good* which *another* enjoys, the *former* of which restrains us from adding any more *Good* to him, as the *latter* excites us to deprive him of that which he is

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already possessed of, both which do apparently arise from the Want and Indigence of Good in our selves. But now in God there being no Want of Good, it is impossible there should be either Envy or Avarice in him; and both these being excluded, there can be no Temptation at all in his Nature either not to do Good, or to do *Evil* to others. For we see among Men, the more perfect and happy they are, the less good still they desire for themselves, and the more for others. Since therefore the great God is infinitely perfect and infinitely happy, it is impossible he should desire any Good for himself; and therefore if he act for any Good at all, as he cannot but do, it must be for ours. For *God* *is* *good*. And lastly, *God* loves himself infinitely, and therefore cannot but be good. For whatsoever Being loves itself, must necessarily love its own Resemblance and Likeness; for that which is lovely in us is lovely in another, and if there be any Reason why we should love our selves, there is the same Reason why we should love another that resembles us, in those Things for which we love our selves. 'Tis true, we poor imperfect Creatures do many times love our selves without Reason, out of a meer blind Impetus and necessary Instinct of Nature. But God, being infinitely wise, governs all his

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Motions by the wisest Rules, and doth every Thing for the best and most excellent Reasons; and consequently doth not love himself he cannot tell why, out of any blind unaccountable Instinct in his Nature; but he loves himself so far only as he hath Reason to do it, and 'tis because he hath infinite Reason for it that he loves himself infinitely: And the Reason why he loves himself to that infinite Degree that he doth, is because he is infinitely perfect, and so hath infinite Reason to be delighted and satisfied with himself; and this being the Reason, he cannot but love others that resemble him in that for which he loves himself. For though others cannot be infinitely happy as he is, yet they are happy in such a Degree as there Capacities will bear; and when they are so, he hath the same Reason, though not so much, to love them as he hath to love himself. And he that loves Happiness in another as well as in himself, will not only love it where it is already, but be very much inclined to propagate it where it is not. So that this, I think, is a most plain Case, that if Perfection and Happiness be the Reason of God's love, he cannot but love it in another as well as in himself; and if he love it in another, he cannot but be inclined to contribute to the producing it. And there-

therefore unless we suppose *God*, contrary to the *Genius* of all other Beings, not to love *his own* Resemblance, nor to be at all concerned to propagate it; we must necessarily suppose him to be *Good*, or which is all one, inclined to make others *happy*. And to say that *God* loves Happiness in *himself*, but yet that he affects to make *others* miserable without any Prospect of Advantage to *himself*, is to say that he loves Contraries in different Objects, that is, Happiness in *himself*, and Misery in *others*; which is to make his Love to be guided by the *extravagant* Impulses of a *mutable* Fancy, and not by the *steady* Rules of Wisdom. But since it is impossible for any Being to love that which is contrary to himself, we may be sure that *God* cannot love Misery, whose Nature is so infinitely *happy*; and since I am sure that every Being must love its own Resemblance, if it love it self; I am as sure that *God* loves that *others* should be happy, as I can be that he is so *himself*.

And thus I have endeavoured from the very Nature of *God* to demonstrate this great Truth to you, *That he is good*; and plainly proved to you that by all those *infinite* Perfections which are the *necessary* Results of his Self-existence he is most strongly and vehemently inclined to do good to others.

And

And now to conclude all, we will briefly consider what Use may be made of this Discourse for the Guidance and Conduct of our Lives and Actions.

1. Then, if *God* be *good*, this may serve to support us under all the *sad* Events that befall us in this World. For what *greater* Satisfaction than this can any *reasonable* Man desire, to be under the Government of, and to have all his Affairs disposed by a *God* that cannot but be *good*? For now all Events and Accidents that befall us must be what *God* intends and designs them, because he hath the Management and Disposal of them all; and to be sure a *good* *God* can never have an *ill* Design upon his Creatures. 'Tis true, when his Creatures prove Malefactors, he may and doth *chastise* and punish them; but even in doing thus he hath a most *gracious* and *merciful* Design, namely, to reform the Offender himself; or to make him a *publick* Example to all the *rational* World, that they may take warning by his Ruin, and not run upon the Rock that dashed him in pieces. And to punish Offenders is as great an act of Mercy to the *Publick*, as it is to reward the *Loyal* and *Obedient*; for if out of a *fond* Indulgence to *insolent* Rebels he should let them go on in a State of Impunity, the *Publick* would suffer a great deal
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more by it than those Rebels can do by a just and deserved Punishment; for their Impunity would embolden others to take the same Courses, and so the Contagion would run on without any stop from one to another, till the Whole were infected; and the Plague of Wickedness became Epidemical to all the reasonable Creation; and so by sparing a few he would destroy a great many, and his Mercy to Particulars would be Cruelty to the Whole. But so long as we are honest and sincere in our Obedience to God, we may be sure that whatsoever befalls us in particular is intended for our good; for he cannot intend Hurt to an honest Soul without doing open Violence to his own Goodness; because the Hurt of such an one is a pure Mischief; it can serve no good End, but is likely to prove a greater Prejudice to the Publick, than it can be to the Person that endures it: For as the Impunity of great Offenders will imbolden others to offend, so the ruining of obedient Subjects will discourage others from obeying. So that to design Hurt or Damage to a sincerely good Man is to do Mischief for its own sake, and this can proceed from nothing but pure abstracted Malice, which is the very Quintessence of a Devil; but I am sure can have no Room in the Breast of our good God and merciful Father. I confess in this Life
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all Things do fall out so alike to all, that 'tis impossible for us to judge of God's *particular* Design and Intention towards us by the Nature of the Things that we suffer; and therefore in this Case the only *infallible* Course we can take is thoroughly and impartially to examine our selves; and if upon a *serious* Review of our own Hearts and Ways we can truly say that we have been *honest* and *sincere* to God and our Duty, we may be as sure that he designs *good* to us in all those Afflictions that he lays upon us, as we can be that there is such a Being as God in the World. And if for the Time *past* we should find that we have been *bad* and *false* and *hypocritical*; yet since God still continues us in this Life of Tryal, and permits us the Priviledge of being *Candidates* and *Probationers* for the *Heavenly* Preferments, we may safely conclude from the Goodness of his Nature that whatsoever he doth to us he designs as no Harm; for how can it be imagined that the *good* God should design our Misery at that very time, while he continues us in a Probation for Happiness? Wherefore let us chearfully undergo whatsoever he lays upon us, concluding that there is nothing but *Good* can come from a *good* God; that even his Punishments are *cordial*, and all his Rods dip'd in Love; and though

though they may smart severely, and fetch Blood from our very Hearts ; yet let us determine with our selves that they must be *good* or *bad* according as God intends them, and that the *good* God must needs intend them for *good*.

2ly. Is God thus naturally and essentially *good* ? Then this may serve for an *excellent* Standard whereby to judge of our Opinions in *Religion*. For most Opinions in *Religion* have either a *near* or *remote* Tendency to the Honour and Dishonour of God's Goodness ; and though I will not say that every Opinion is *true* that seems to extol and advance the Goodness of God, yet I am sure that every Opinion must be *false* that doth either directly or by *true* Consequence deny or disgrace it. For let our Opinions be *true* or *false*, yet this I am sure is eternally *true*, that *God is good* ; and while I am sure of this, I can never believe any Doctrine *true* that thwarts and contradicts it ; because I am sure that from Truth there is nothing but Truth can be inferred throughout the *longest* Train of Deductions. This therefore we ought to be infinitely cautious of, how we entertain any Opinion whatsoever, that seems but to clash with the Goodness of *God* ; for if it but seem to do so, we are bound by all the Zeal we owe to the di-

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vine Goodness to suspect it of Fashood, or at least not to be over-confident of its Truth till we see it fairly acquitted of that *foul* Imputation. For to preserve in our Minds *consistent* Opinions of the Goodness of God is a thing that we ought to be as careful of, as of the Apple of our own Eyes; because an *ill* Opinon of God is a Flaw in the very Foundation of our *Religion* and our Comfort; and it will be impossible for us to serve him long, either with Sincerity or with Pleasure, if we do not firmly believe him to be a *good* Master.

3dly. Is God thus naturally and essentially *good*? Then this may serve to hearten and encourage us in his Service. For to be sure so *good* a Master will never prove *unkind* to any *faithful* Servant; that he will not burthen us above our strength, but most freely contribute to us all the Assistance that is *necessary* to inable us to our Duty; that he will not be angry with us for Trifles and *Punctilio's*, but consider our *Weakness*, and pity our *Follies*, and make the most *candid* Interpretation of our Actions, and finally judge us by the Measures of a Friend; that when we wilfully miscarry, he will not presently cast us off *for ever*, but will be intreated by our Repentance, and appeased by our Amendment,

ment, and graciously receive us again into his Mercy and Favour; that he will not be *narrow* and *stingy* in the Recompence of our Duty to him, but reward us a Thousand-fold with such *immense* Glories and Beatitudes, as shall make us *for ever* bless the Moment we entred into his Service: All these things we may confidently conclude and build upon from the *transcending* Goodness of his Nature. And what *greater* Encouragement can we expect, or desire? Why then are we afraid, O *foolish* Souls, that we are! Why are we afraid to engage in his Service? Where can we hope to find a more *gracious, compassionate, and bountiful* Master; one that will be more ready to help and to pity, to pardon and reward us? If there be any *equal* Rival to God in all the World, any in whose Service you can ingage your selves with *equal* Hopes and Encouragements; go on and prosper in the Service of that *great* Rival. But if God be infinitely the *best* Master in the World, as doubtless he is, Why do we stand Debating the Case any longer? Why do we not run at least as chearfully to his Service, as we would to the *greatest* Advancement that any *Mortal* Prince can tender us? In the name of God, Sirs, be once so *Wise* as to consult *your own* Interest, and
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do not stand any longer in *your own* Light. Behold the *great* and *good* God stands ready to entertain you, and condescends to invite you to the most *glorious* Service that ever was; a Service that is most *easie* and *reasonable*, that is intermixt with *infinite* Pleasure and Sweetness, and crowned with the Reward of all that an *everlasting* Heaven means. Wherefore as you love your selves, and value *your own* Welfare, resolve once for all with those in the *Prophet*; *Other Lords besides thee have had dominion over us, but thee only, Our good God, will we now serve.*

4thly. And lastly, From hence I infer, that it is an *unreasonable* Thing for Men to suspect the Goodness of God, because of some *uncertain* Appearances in the World to the contrary. For from the very Principles of God's Nature we are certainly assured that he must be *good*, which is the *highest* Demonstration that Things are capable of; and therefore to suspect his Goodness upon the Account of some *little* Appearances to the contrary, is to confront Demonstrations with *slender* Probabilities, and *over-rule* a Certainty with a *doubtful* Guess. And yet how common is it for Men to arraign the Goodness of God meerly upon the Account of some *visible* Effects of his Power, which to their *narrow* Apprehensions

seem *hurtful* and *mischievous*; as if we had such an *intire* Prospect of all the Relations and Tendencies of God's Actions, as that none could possibly appear either *good* or *evil* to us, but what is really so. Whereas, God knows, we are a company of *miserable short-sighted* Creatures, and are not able to see from the Beginning to the End of any *one* Action in all the Train of God's Providence; so that though *this* or *that* Action may appear *evil* to us, considered singly and in the *present* Effects of it, yet in it self it may be highly *good*, considering what a Dependence it hath upon what went before, and what a Tendency it hath to what is to follow after. For God by his *infinite* Comprehension having all Things *present* and *before* him, hath so ranked and disposed them, that from *first* to *last* they are all but one *complicated* and *orderly united* Means to bring about those *great* Ends which he first designed and intended; and consequently all the Passages in the World in his *providential* Dominion over them have a *strict* and *mutual* Dependence on each other, and so cannot be judged of *singly* and *apart* from *one another*, there being no one Action but relates to *Millions* of others, yea to all others from the *first* to the *last* Link of Action in the whole Chain of Providence. And therefore

fore for us to measure the Goodness of God's Providence in *general* by those *particular* Parts of it that lie before us, is just as if a Man should judge of a whole *Consort* of Musick only by hearing *three* or *four* Notes of a *well-composed* Lesson, whereas the whole *Harmony* consists in a *well-composed* Mixture of a *thousand* Notes and Discords, wherein all the particulars are so interwoven as that the *several* Notes *united* in one Lesson have a most *excellent* Symetry and Proportion to *one another*. For in the whole *Consort* of the *divine* Providence there are a *thousand* Discords, which, to us who hear them *singly* and *apart* from the rest, do many times yield a very *ungrateful* Sound; whereas could we discern but the whole *Composure*, and hear how elegantly all thole Discords are mingled into one *entire* Harmony, we should never be able to forbear *admiring* the Skill, and *adoring* the Wisdom and Goodness of the great *Harmos*tes. But since 'tis so *impossible* for us to discern all the *Connections* and *Tendencies* of God's Actions, how unreasonable is it for us to censure the Goodness of his Nature, because there are some Actions of his, and some Effects of those Actions, whose Goodness at present we are not able to discover. Wherefore, if we have either Reason or Modesty in us,

we ought to be satisfied with those Arguments of his Goodness that are drawn from the Principles of his Nature, and though we cannot account for the Goodness of all his Actions in *particular*, yet firmly to resolve that nothing but *Good* can come from a *good God*.

PSALM

PSALM CXIX. 68.

Thou art good, and thou dost good.

I Proceed to the second Part of the Text, viz. the *Operations* of God that flow from the *immutable* Goodness of his Nature; *Thou dost good*: And these as they flow from the Goodness of God's Nature, so they are *plain* Proofs and Indications of it. For as the Nature of Things is *demonstrable* by their *Effects* as well as their *Causes*, so the Goodness of God may be as well demonstrated by the *Operations* it exerts, and the *Effects* it produces in the World, as by those Principles and Perfections of his Nature from whence it necessarily arises. And it is as certain that *that* Being must be *good* that hath all the *necessary* Causes and Principles of Goodness in it; for if it were *indifferent* to the *Almighty* whether he did *Good* or *Evil*, he would doubtless either retire from Action and do neither, or else he would do as much *Mischief* as *Good*; or if he were inclined to do *ill* he would do it, and not force himself to act contrary to his own Inclinations. Wherefore since he doth

Good so constantly and so universally, he can neither be supposed to be *averse* nor *indifferent* to it ; and if he be neither of these, his doing *Good* must necessarily proceed from the *immutable* Inclination of his Nature thereunto. If therefore we can prove from the whole Course and Series of God's *Operations* that he doth *Good*, it will be an *infallible* Argument that he is so. Now all those *Operations* of God that pass out of *himself*, and terminate upon *others* are reducible to *Creation* and *Providence* ; both which will afford us *abundant* Instances of the Truth of the Text, that *God doth Good*.

I. I begin with the first, *viz.* *Creation* ; in which it is apparent that God hath done an *infinite* deal of *Good*. And hence the *Psalmist* tells us that *the whole earth is full of the goodness of the Lord*, Psalm xxxiii. 5. so also Psalm civ. 24. *O Lord how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all ; the earth is full of thy Riches*, [i. e. the Riches of his Goodness] *and so is the great and wide Sea*. And God himself after his great Work of Creation, upon a *general* Survey of the whole Fabrick of Beings, pronounces all to be *very good*, Gen. i. 31. But to demonstrate more particularly the *great* Goodness that God hath expressed in his Creation, I shall briefly give you these four Instances of it.

I. That

1. That whatsoever Beings are *incapable* of Happiness in themselves, he hath made them so far as they can be, *subservient* to the Happiness of *others*.
2. That he hath given *actual* Existence to all kinds of Beings that are *capable* of any Degree of Happiness.
3. That he hath furnished them with all the *sufficient* Means and Abilities to obtain the *utmost* Happiness that they are *capable* of.
4. That in all those Beings that are *capable* of Happiness, he hath implanted a *natural* Disposition of Doing Good to *others*.

1. That whatsoever Beings are *incapable* of Happiness in themselves, he hath made them so far as they can be, *subservient* to the Happiness of *others*. For it is impossible that all Beings that are *capable* of Happiness could ever have been actually happy, had not God created some Beings that are utterly *incapable* of it. For thus all the *Heavenly* Bodies, the *Air*, and *Earth*, and *Fire* and *Water* are Beings utterly *incapable* of Happiness, they being all *inanimate*, and consequently *void* of all Sense and Perception either of Happiness or Misery; but yet it cannot be denied but they are indispensably *necessary* to the Happiness of a World of *animated*

ted Beings that are *capable* of some Degrees of Happiness. Thus, for instance, the Happiness of all *sublunary* Things, of *Men* and *Beasts*, of the *Fowls* of the *Air* and the *Fishes* of the *Sea*, depends in a *great* Measure on those *dead inanimated* Elements ; and therefore if *God* had not created some Beings *incapable* of Happiness, there are many Beings that are *capable* of it must either have not been, or have been *miserable*. And therefore *God* hath not only created these, but out of his *great* Goodness to his *living* Creatures he hath created them in such an Order as renders them as *subservient* as they can be to their Welfare and Happiness. Thus the *Sun*, whom *God* hath ordained the *universal* Foster-father of all *sublunary* Beings, though he feels no Happiness himself, is created by our *great* Benefactor in such a Form and put in such a Course of Motion, as renders him most *serviceable* to all those *animated* Beings, that are *capable* of Happiness. For first he is created of a *fiery* Substance, by which he not only enlightens this *lower* World, but warms and cherishes it with a *fruitful* and *vigorous* Heat. And then *God* hath cast all its *mighty* Substance into the Figure of a *perfect* Globe, that so if the *Earth* moves round it, it might be able to communicate the comfort of its Light and Heat

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to it throughout all the Circle of its Motion; or that if *it* moves round the *Earth*, it may by its Figure, which is most *apt* for Motion, be the better enabled to walk his Rounds about the World, and so visit all his Foster-Children, and refresh them with his Light and Warmth as oft as their Necessities require. And then for his Situation in the World, what an *exact* Care hath the *good* Father of Beings taken to place him in such a *convenient* Distance as that he might neither be *too* near us, nor *too* far from us; both which would have been equally *mischievous*. For had he been advanced *higher* in the *Heavens*, he would have left us continually *frozen* and *benighted*; had he been thrust *lower*, he would have perpetually scorched us with the *too* near Neighbourhood of his Flames. But from that *Orb* wherein he is placed all his Aspects on us are *benigne*; and Thanks be to a *good* God we neither want his Heat or Light, nor are we scorched and dazled by it. For if *God* had not been very *careful* of the *Publick* Good he might as well have fixed the *Sun* in the *Orb* of the *Moon* as where it now is, and then as its Nearness to us would have turned the World into a *Torrid Zone*, so it would have run through the whole *Zodiack* in the space of a Month, and consequently the *four* Seasons,

sons, viz. *Winter* and *Summer*, and *Spring* and *Autumn* which do now fill up the Circle of the Year, would have been all thrust together in *four* Weeks ; by means whereof as all *living* Creatures would have been very much prejudiced by the frequent Changes of the Air, so all Vegetation must have necessarily ceased. For the *Winter* Frost must have Killed the Fruits of the Earth before ever the *Summers* Heat could have ripened them ; and the Fruits of the Earth being destroyed all *living* Creatures must have perished with Famine. Since then there are an *infinite* Number of other Places in the *Heavens* wherein *God* could have fixed the *Sun* if he had pleased, but none so commodious for the World as *that* where it is, what could move him to choose *this* above all others but only his *great* Care of the Welfare of his Creatures? Once more, If we consider the Course of its Motion, how could it have been more exactly ordered than it is for the *publick* Benefit of the Inhabitants of the World? For whereas in it self 'twas as apt to move in a *direct* Line as in a Circle, which if it had done, only one *half* of the *Earth* could have been warmed and enlightened by it, whilst the *other* had been covered with *eternal* Frost and Darknes; the *good God* hath appointed him
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to run about the *Globe*, and that with so much Swift-
ness; notwithstanding he is so vast a Body, that once in *Twenty four* Hours he brings Day into both the *Hemispheres*; and whereas had he always moved round in the same middle Circle without ever swerving either *Southward* or *Northward*, all those vast Tracts of *Earth* that lie beyond the *Polar Circles* would have been well nigh lost in an everlasting Winter, and consequently their wretched Inhabitants condemned to Famine and Cold; the good God hath chalked him out those oblique Paths of the *Zodiack*, in which in the *Summer* he travels towards the *Northern*, and in the *Winter* towards the *Southern Hemisphere*, and so once a Year brings a warm *Summer* to them both. Thus God hath placed the *Sun* in the *Heaven* as his *Almoner*, and furnished him with all the Advantages he is capable of to relieve the Necessities of his Creatures; and every Morning he visits us from his bountiful Master, and with his kindly Influence ripens the Fruits of the *Earth* for us, and comforts us with the Warmth and Brightness of his Rays. And though he receives no Happiness himself, yet is so framed, and placed, and moved by the *Father of Lights*, that he abundantly administers to the Happiness of others.

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And the same may be said of the *Moon*, which is a kind of *Deputy-Sun* to supply his Place in the Night, and by the moist Warmth it diffuses to promote the *Generation* and *Growth* of all *vegetable* Beings. And that it may do this the more effectually its Motions are not confined, like the Sun's, within the *Tropicks*; but in pity to those *poor* Animals that dwell nearer towards the *Poles* the good God hath sent her some degrees farther to visit them in their long uncomfortable Nights and supply the Sun's absence from them, and temperate the Cold and Darkness that covers them, with the Warmth and Brightness of her Beams. And accordingly when the *Sun* goes Southward she draws nearer towards the *Northern*, when Northward, towards the *Southern Pole*, as if she pitied those *poor Regions* that are thus forsaken of the *Sun*, and so went in pure Charity to those *fatherless* and *widowed* Animals that inhabit them, to supply his Absence with her own *vicarious* Light. But 'twould be endless to recite the vast Commodities we receive from the other heavenly Bodies, and what infinite Care the good God hath taken so to order and direct the Course of their Motion, as that those Beings that are capable of Happiness might be most benefited by them.

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But then if from hence we descend into the *Air*, how proper a *Medium* is this *fluid* and *transparent* Element to convey to us the Light and Influences of the *heavenly Bodies*? What a *convenient Volary* is it for *feathered* Animals? For being the most *fluid* of all Bodies it easily gives Way to the Vibration of their Wings, and so, that as that *Air* that is under them bears them up; so that which is before them is no Hindrance to their Motion. In a word, how *necessary* is it to supply and refresh the Spirits of all Animals in general, which if they did not suck in *new Air* almost every Moment would immediately be suffocated.

Again, if from the *Air* we descend to the *Earth*, how liberally hath the *good God* impregnated its *vast* Womb with the Seeds and Principles of all those *Herbs*, and *Flowers*, and *Plants*, and Minerals that can be any ways *Subservient* to the Happiness of those *numerous* Animals wherewithall it is peopled; infomuch that it is become a *general* Magazine of Provisions not only for the Necessities, but for the Delights of its Inhabitants.

Thus also the *Sea*, that *vast* Continent of Water, is so contrived by the *Almighty* Creator, that it not only administers to the Sustenance and Delight of its own Inhabitants,

tants, but also to the Happiness of all *other* Animals. For from its *vast* Treasury of Waters it sends forth *fruitful* Streams into all Parts of the *Earth* through divers Holes that are bored at convenient Distances, and forces them to climb up to the Tops of Mountains, not only that they may be able to run down again with Ease, but also to carry themselves to such Heights afterwards as the Necessities of Men and Beasts do require; so that even the most *In-land* Parts of the *Earth* are made *fruitful* by their Moistures, and all their *thirsty* Inhabitants are watered and refreshed by them. Besides which it is also most highly *useful* for *Navigation*, whereby the *remotest* Parts of the World maintain an *easy* Correspondence, and do mutually change the Commodities of Life with *one another*. Lastly, if we consider the *Fire*, what a most *useful* Servant hath the *great* Creator rendered it to Mankind? For by this we do not only supply the Absence of *Summer*, but do also prepare all our Food; and render it *wholesome* and *pleasant*, and most successfully serve ourselves in all Arts and *Manufactures*.

Thus I have briefly touched upon all the visible Creation of *inanimate* Beings, and shewn you how *careful* the *great* and *good* Creator hath been to improve them all to
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the utmost to the Happiness of his *animated* Creatures, that so there might no *necessary* Supply be wanting to compleat those *several* Degrees of Happiness for all Beings in the World, and none might be *miserable* but such as choose to be so. What a *noble* Instance is this therefore of the *immense* Goodness of *God* in this Work of Creation, that he hath made all Beings that are *incapable* of Happiness to minister as much as they are able to those that are *capable* of it, and thereby spread his Table with an *infinite* variety not only of Necessaries, but of Delicacies to *treat* and entertain all his *sensitive* Creation? Who can suspect his Goodness, when the *Heavens* and all the *Elements* do so loudly proclaim it, by their being so contrived and ordered by his Wisdom, as to do the utmost *Good* they are able to those Things that have any Capacity of Happiness?

2ly, Another Instance of his doing good in this *great* Work of his Creation is his giving *actual* Existence to such *innumerable* Kinds of Being that are *capable* of Happiness. Were we but able to survey the whole *Scale* of Beings from the *lowest* of *sensitive* to the *highest* of *rational*, we should doubtless find in it such an *innumerable* Company of Rounds as all our *Arithmetick* could never be able to compute, For we see that.

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even *this* Earth, which is but a very *little* Spot of the World, contains in it such a *prodigious* Army of *distinct* Kinds of *sensitive* Beings as all the *Histories of Animals* were never able to muster; and could we but reckon down from Man, to the *lowest* Mite of *animated* Matter that the *Earth* and *Sea* contains, we should find that even here there are so many Kinds of Beings as are *capable* at least of some Degrees of Happiness, as would give us Cause enough to admire and adore the *infinite* Fecundity of the *divine* Goodness. And is it likely that *this* Earth, which is but the Sink of the World, should be the only *inhabitable* Part of it? That since the *Almighty* hath so well stock'd this *little* Inclosure, he should *for ever* leave *desolate* of Inhabitants all those *immense* Tracts of *pure Ether* in which the *Planets* and *Fixed Stars* do swim? That when he hath so thronged this *dark* Cellar with *living* Creatures, he should make no Use at all of those *vast* and *glorious* Rooms, but let them stand empty *for ever*, as if he had erected them only for Pomp and Shew, without any Design to *people* them with such *noble* Inhabitants as they are capable to receive? Well then, let us but suppose, as we may very fairly do, that the *other* Parts of the World are stock'd with *living* Creatures

tures but in the same proportion with *this*, and then what an *innumerable* Drove of *distinct* kinds of Bings will the Whole consist of? And indeed considering what *infinite* Degrees of Being are within the Sphere of God's *Omnipotence*, and how *suitable* it is to his Goodness in his Productions to reach the *utmost* Limits of Possibility, it seems no way *unreasonable* to believe that he hath given *actual* Existence to all *possible* Kinds of Beings that are *capable* of Life and Happiness, and can without any Prejudice either to themselves or Neighbours be contained within the Compass and immensity of the World; and consequently that he hath not only filled with *living* Creatures the *Earth* and *Air* and *Sea*, but, if it be possible, all the Capacities of an *immense* and *infinite* Space. But whether this be so or no, it is an *abundant* Evidence of the Goodness of *God*, that he hath created such *innumerable* Kinds of *living* Creatures, the *meanest* of which are *capable* of some Degree of Happiness. For unless we will assert one of the greatest Absurdities in our *modern Philosophy*, That all *sensitive* Animals are nothing but meer *Machins*, and consequently have no Sense or Perception in them; we must allow them all, even to the *smallest* Insect, a Capacity of some Degree of Happiness. For what-

foever hath Sense is *sensible* of Pleasure, and whatsoever is *sensible* of Pleasure is *capable* of Happiness ; and he that made so many Beings *capable* of Happiness, to be sure never intended that their Capacities should be in vain. Behold then the *vast* Design and Project of the *divine* Goodness that would let nothing lie buried in the *Abyss* of *Non-entity*, whose *Idea* included but a Possibility of being *happy*, and hath given *actual* Existence unto all kinds of Beings, even the most *inconsiderable* Animals, for which it was better to be than not to be ; that at least hath raised up an *innumerable* Company of Beings into a Capacity of being *happy*, and made such *ample* Provision to supply their Natures with all the Degrees of Happiness that they are *capable* of! For

3dly, Another Instance of his doing *good* in this *great* Work of Creation is his furnishing all these Beings with sufficient Means and Abilities to obtain the utmost Happiness that they are *capable* of. For I have already shewn you, that *God* hath so made and ordered the *inanimate* World that it administers *sufficient* Matter of Happiness unto all *sensitive* Beings; that the *Heavens* and the *Elements* by the Ordination of *God* do all conspire together to contribute to our Happiness, to *warm* and *refresh* us, to *feed* and *cloath* us, and to render

der our Lives, not only *supportable*, but *pleasant* and *delightful*. And of this *vast* Contribution every Animal, even the most *minute*, hath its Share; so that now they can want nothing that is *necessary* to their Happiness, but only an Ability to use and apply the *liberal* Provisions that God hath made for them; and this he hath also most graciously furnished them with, For in all *Brute* Creatures God hath implanted a *natural* Instinct by which they are strongly inclined to that which is *good* for them, and as strongly averse to what is *hurtful* and *injurious*; so that by their very Natures he hath impelled them to make Use of those Provisions which he hath made for their Happiness; and he hath also furnished them with a *natural* Sagacity to provide against Want, and with *fitting* Instruments of Sense to relish and enjoy the *several* Pleasures which he hath prepared to entertain them: All which he hath done to that *vast* Advantage, that 'tis impossible for *humane* Wisdom to say how any one Kind of *Animals* could have been more exactly framed for the enjoyment of such a Happiness, as is *proper* to its Nature, But then for us Men that are *capable* of much more than a meer *sensitive* Happiness, he hath not only prepared such a Happiness as is *proportionable* to our Capacities,

but hath also implanted in our Natures a *full* Ability to obtain it. For as for our *sensitive* Happiness, there is *sufficient* Provision made for it in the *common* Store-house of Nature, and by the Industry and the *good* Use of our Reason we may ordinarily secure our selves, if we please, from the Want of whatsoever is *necessary* thereunto; for a very *little* of these *sensitive* Enjoyments is enough to make a *wise* Man *happy*, and we want no *bodily* *Organs* or *Sensories* to relish any of those Pleasures of which our *sensitive* Happiness is composed. And then for our *supreme* Happiness, as we are *reasonable* Beings, God by giving us *Reason*, and *Understanding*, and *Freedom* of *Choice*, hath furnished us with *sufficient* Ability to obtain it. For our Happiness, as we are *reasonable* Creatures, consists in the most *perfect* Exercise of our *noblest* Faculties, *viz.* our *Understanding* and our *Will*; and there is no Object in Nature about which these Faculties can be perfectly exercised but only God, who is the Fountain of all Truth and Goodness; and consequently our Happiness as Men must consist in the Enjoyment of God, that is, in *knowing*, and *loving*, and *resembling* him *for ever*. And in order to our obtaining of this, God hath furnished us with *Understanding*, by the *good* Improvement

ment of which we may easily arrive to the Knowledge of him; for he hath placed us so advantageously in Being, that, as from a *convenient* Station in a *noble* Theater, we are able to contemplate the *admirable* Schemes of those *magnificent* Works which God hath set round about us; and from the *Vastness* of the whole *Structure*, the *Variety* of its *Parts*, and the *beautiful* Order which appears in their *admirable* Connection, we can easily infer, that such a *noble* Production must needs be owing to an *Almighty* Skill and Goodness. And then such is the Frame of our Natures, that we easily love that which we know to be lovely, and consequently if we are not prejudiced by *preternatural* Lusts, that which we behold of God in his Works will imprint such an *amiable* Notion of him in our Minds, as will almost necessarily engage us to love him; and then our Love will provoke us to *imitate* those Beauties for which we love him, we being naturally *ambitious* of transcribing those Perfections into our selves which we love and admire in *another*; and then by imitating him, we shall by Degrees be moulded into his Likeness and Resemblance; for *Acts* will beget *Inclinations*, *Inclinations* will grow into *Habits*, and *Habits* will become our Nature. So that you see God

hath implanted an Ability of *knowing* and *loving* and *resembling* himself in the very Frame and Structure of our Natures; these Things we are as *capable* of as of any Thing whatsoever that is *rational* and *manly*; we are as *capable* of knowing God, as of knowing any Thing that is *knowable*; as *capable* of loving him, as of loving any Thing that is *amiable*; as *capable* of resembling him, as of imitating any Thing that is *imitable*; and these are the *noblest* and most *essential* Parts of the Happiness of a *rational* Nature. Now what an *undeniable* Instance is this of the Goodness of God, that he hath not only made so many Kinds of Beings *capable* of so many *different* Degrees of Happiness, but that he hath furnished them all with such *abundant* Means and Abilities to obtain it? O *blessed* God, what Heart can be so *stupid* and *insensible* as not to admire and adore thy *exuberant* Goodness, which hath thus extended it self to the *utmost* Borders of *Entity*, and blessed with its *overflowing* Streams such an *infinite* Number of Beings! What Tongue is able sufficiently to *praise* and *extol* thy Benignity, that out of thine own *immense* Fulness hast supplied such a *vast* Creation with such Capacities, and such Means, and such Abilities of being *happy*!

4thly,

4thly. And Lastly, Another Instance of his doing *good* in this *great* Work of Creation, is his implanting a *natural* Inclination of doing *good* to *others* in all those Beings that are *capable* of Happiness. For it being his Design to propagate this Sort of Beings by way of Generation to the End of the World, he hath implanted in all Parents, as well *sensitive* as *rational*, a *natural* Love and Good-will to their Off-spring, and that to such a Degree as we see the most *timorous* and *helpless* Creatures are not only very *industrious* to nurse and cherish them, but very *courageous* in their Defence and Preservation, which is a *great* Instance of the *indulgent* Care which the *great* Father of Beings hath of all his Children, that he hath committed them in their Infancy to such *tender* Nurses that will be sure to take Care to make Provision for them when they are not able to provide for themselves; that he hath not trusted them to the Compassion and *good* Nature of *other* Beings to be maintained by the Alms, and *free* Benevolence of their *fellow* Creatures, but hath taken Security for their *liberal* Nurture and Education from the very Nature and *inmost* Bowels of their Parents; who were so framed that they cannot choose but make Provision for them if they are able, with-
out

out doing the *greatest* Outrage to themselves, and stifling one of the *strongest* Inclinations of their Natures ; which inclination of *natural* Parents doth therefore loudly proclaim the *infinite* Goodness of the *great* Parent of all Things to his Children ; because there can be no *other* Reason assigned why he should implant *this* Inclination in our Natures, but because he loved us, and was therefore resolved to take the most *effectual* Course that Care might be taken of us, when we were not capable to take Care for ourselves. And can we think that the *supreme* Father, who hath implanted in all *natural* Parents such a *necessary* Inclination to do good to their Children, should be *forgetful* and *regardless* of *his own* Off-spring ? He that planted the Eye, shall not he see ? And he that gave the Ear, shall not he hear ? And by the same Reason, he that hath so strongly inclined our Natures to the Love of our Off-spring, shall not he love *his own* ? Shall not his Nature be as strongly inclined to do good to them ? For the whole Creation being nothing else but the *Expansion* or *Spreading* forth of the *divine* Simplicity and Perfection, all Creatures do more *properly* belong to God than Families or Actions do to the Principles from whence they flow ; so that we are as it were *Flesh of his Flesh, and*
Bone

Bone of his Bone; and *no Man*, saith the Apostle, *hateth his own Flesh*, but rather *nourishes* and *cherishes it*: And if *Man* doth not, can we imagin that *God* doth? For as for *Man*, we see the more *perfect* he is, and the more *suitable* to his Nature he acts, the more he is inclined to do *good*, and that not only to *his own* but to all *others* that are within the Sphere of his Beneficence. He finds in himself such a *diffusive* and *all-spreading* Principle of Love as renders him an *universal* Friend and Benefactor to the World, and makes him *sympathize* in the Happiness and Misery of all Beings; and this *brave* Temper of Mind is doubtless one of the *highest* Perfections that the Soul of Man is *capable* of. Since therefore *originally* we came no otherwise to the Knowledge of God's Perfections than as we found them copyed out and transcribed into *our own* Natures, how can we imagin that *God* should not be inclined to *universal* Love and Beneficence, when we acknowledge it a Perfection in *our selves* to be so? Can there be any Perfection in us that is not in *God* in the *utmost* Degree of Possibility? And therefore if the Inclination to do *good* be a *Perfection* in us, it must needs be in *God* in all the *possible* Degrees that an *infinite* Nature is *capable* of; and since he hath so framed all *reasonable* Natures,

tures, that *universal* Love and Proneness to do good is one of their *greatest* Perfections and Accomplishments, we may be sure that *his own*, which is the *great* Standard and Pattern of all *reasonable* Natures, is infinitely *loving* and prone to do good. And thus you see what mighty *unanswerable* Instances there are of the Goodness of God in the Works of his Creation.

Wherefore to conclude this Argument; From hence we see what *mighty* Obligations we are under to serve and obey, so far as we are able, the *great* and *good* Author of our Beings, who hath not only created us, but created us in a *vast* Capacity of Happiness, and furnished us with *sufficient* Means and Abilities to attain it. Wherefore since, all our Powers and Abilities are from him, we are bound in Justice to imploy them in his Service; and since by giving us those Abilities he hath done us so much *good*, and rendred us *capable* of such *immense* degrees of Happiness, we are obliged in Gratitude not to imploy them in doing any Thing that is any ways displeasing or dishonourable to him. For what can be more *just* or *reasonable* than that God should have the Use of those Powers which he gave us, and in which he still retains an *unalienable* Right and Property? That the *Temples* which he
hath

hath built should be *forever* dedicated to his Service, and not turned into *Dens of Thievs*, or made *Stables of Filth* and *Uncleanness*. So that for us to withdraw our selves from his Service, or to imploy our Powers to any *wicked Purposes*, is to commit a Robbery upon the *Author* of our Beings, and most unjustly to *desseise* him of *his own Goods*, wherein he hath a far more *absolute* Propriety than we pretend to have in the Cloths on our Backs: And in every *bad* Action we do, steal Gods own Powers and Faculties from him, and with *extreme* Injustice imploy them against himself. Now what a *monstrous* Thing is it that we, who think our selves so highly affronted, when any one charges us with Robbery and Injustice, should make no more Conscience of robbing *God*, and *alienating* from him those Faculties and Powers of Action, in which he hath a far more *undoubted* Propriety than any Creature can have in any *Good* it enjoys; but when he hath been so *good* a Creator to us as to create in us such an *ample* Capacity of being *happy*, and furnished us with such *abundant* Means and Abilities of attaining thereunto, then to *elaigne* our selves from his Service, and to pervert those Powers of Action to *sinful* Purposes by which he hath enabled us to be *happy*; is
not

not only *unjust*, but barbarously *ungrateful*. For now in sinning against God we fight against him with *his own* Mercies, and arm the Effects of his Bounty against his *Sovereignty*; and as if we were resolved to revenge our selves upon him for making us so good, and raising us up into such an *excellent* State of Nature, we shamefully dishonour him with *his own* Blessings, and take all Advantages we can to grieve and offend him from the very Means and Abilities which he hath given us to be *happy*. He gave us *Reason* and *Understanding* to discern what is *good* for our selves, and *Liberty* of *Will* to choose and imbrace it; and we like *ungrateful* Wretches imploy that *Reason* and *Liberty* in contriving and choosing the *highest* Treason against him. He gave us *Powers* and *Abilities* of Action, that so we might not only discern and choose what is *best* for us, but might also pursue and obtain it; but we like *base* Caitiffs exert those Abilities in grieving and offending our most *gracious* Benefactor. Wherefore be astonished O ye *Heavens*, and be horribly affraid O all ye *Works of God*! For whilst you are all *obedient* to the Laws of your Maker, and never swerve from those Lines of Motion he hath prescribed you; we, whom he hath advanced into the *highest* Class of Beings,
and

and endowed with the *largest* Capacities and Abilities of being *happy*, are become so *base* and so *shameless* as to injure him with *his own* Gifts, and to convert his very Blessings into Weapons of Rebellion against him. Wherefore unless we are *ambitious* of rendring our selves the most *absolute* Monsters both of Injustice and Ingratitude, unless we have a Fancy to aspire to a Perfection in Baseness, and to *rival* the *Devils* themselves in the most *infamous* and *ignominious* Degrees of Wickedness; let us employ all our Faculties and Abilities for Action in the Service of him from whom we received them, and exercise his Gifts in a *perpetual* Acknowledgment of his Goodness.

P S A L M CXIX. 68.

Thou art good, and thou dost good.

I Have already handled *two* of those *four* Topicks from whence I intended to demonstrate the Goodness of God, viz. his *Nature*, and the *Works* of his *Creation*; of the *First* of which I discoursed, upon the *former* Part of the Words: *Thou art good*. Of the *Second* upon the *later*; *Thou dost good*. But now because the *Doings*, or *Operations* of God include his *Providence* as well as his *Creation*, and God doth good in *that* as well as in *this*; no doubt but the *Psalmist* in these Words had a respect to the *one* as well as the *other*.

I proceed therefore to the *Third* Topick, from whence it doth most evidently appear, and that is his *Providence*. *Thou dost good*, i. e. thou dost good in the great Works of thy *Providence*, and thereby thou dost manifest the Goodness of thy *Nature*, in that as thou didst create a World to *great* and *good* Purposes, so thou dost still continue to do good to it in *upholding* and *governing* it by a most *gracious* Providence. Now in the
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Managment of this Argument I shall do these two things.

1. Give you some *general* and *comprehensive* Instances of Gods doing *good* in the Works of his *Providence*.
2. That though there may be some Things in the World that to us seem to be very *ill* and *hurtful*, yet it is infinitely *unreasonable* for us to suspect the Goodness and Beneficence of the *divine* Providence.

First, I shall give you some *general* and *comprehensive* Instances of Gods doing *good* in the Works of his *Providence*; and they are these Four.

1. His *upholding* Things in that *good* Course and Order wherein he first created them, excepting only when the *publick* Good of his Creatures requires him to interpose.
2. His *continuing* Mankind under an *awful* sense of *Religion*, notwithstanding the *great* Degeneracies of *human* Nature.
3. His *supporting* of Government in the World, notwithstanding the *violent* Tendency of our *corrupt* Nature to *Anarchy* and Confusion.
4. His *contributing* to the Invention and Improvement of all those *useful* Arts and Sciences that are in the World.

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1. His

1. His *upholding* Things in that good Course and Order wherein he first created them, excepting only when the *publick* Good of his Creatures requires him to interpose. That that Order and Course of Things which God first established in his Creation was exceeding good and *beneficial* to it, I have proved at large in my former Discourse; and that God still continues the same good Will to us is apparent, since he still continues things in the same *beneficial* Course and Order wherein he first created them. For we see the *Heaven* and the *Elements* still as kind to us as ever; the *Sun*, *Moon* and *Stars* do still run the same Courses, and still they cherish and refresh us with the same *benign* Influences; and though for *six Thousand* years together they have been perpetually visiting us, and spending the *liberal* Alms of their great Creator upon us, yet to *this* Day they are neither wearied, nor exhausted; but still continue to do us good with the same Freedom and Vigour as when they first danced round the World, and sang together for Joy. The *Fire*, and *Air*, and *Earth* and *Water* are still as *liberal* to us as ever, and do supply us with the same Necessaries of Life as they did from the first Moment of their Being; and though for so many Ages we and *innumerable* other Ani-

mals have been liberally maintained out of these *vast* Store-houses of Nature, yet still we find them replenished with an *inexhaustible* Fulness. So that still not only the *Earth*, but all the *other Elements* are full of the Goodness of the Lord; yea, and though in their Qualities they are quite *contrary* to *one another*, yet are their Animosities so tempered by the *gracious* Providence of *Heaven*, that they all live together like *Brethren* in *unity*, and the *Dryness* of *this* drinks not up the *Moisture* of *that*, nor doth the *Cold* of the *one* quench the *Heat* of the *other*. The *Fire* invades not the *Air*, nor the *Water* the *Earth*, but every one keeps within its *proper* Bounds; and though in *sundry* Places the *Water* be above the *Earth*, yet contrary to its own Nature which is to flow and expatiate it self, it doth only *overlook* its Banks, but doth not *overflow* them, being bounded by that *merciful* Providence, which in *mere* Pity to the Inhabitants of the *Earth*, says to its *proud* Waves, *hitherto shall ye go, and no further*. So that in short the Continuation of the *regular* Motions of the *Heavens*, of the *Vicissitudes* of *Seasons*, and *alternate* Mutation of Bodies, of the safety of the whole *Universe*, notwithstanding the *rude* Clashings of *turbulent* Matter, and of the *exact* Symmetry of all the Parts

of it in Despite of the *frequent* Rencounters of so many *contrary* Principles, shews not only the Power and Presence of some *great* Mind, but is also a *plain* Evidence of the Continuation of his Care and *good* Will to the World. And as he hath continued the *inanimate* World in that most *excellent* Course and Order wherein he first created it, so he hath still preserved all those *innumerable* Species of Animals which he *first* gave Being to; so that in so many Ages and among so many Chances there is not *one* Kind of them hath either failed, or perished, or become *less capable* of Happiness, or *less* furnished with Means and Abilities of obtaining it. So that his Providence is nothing else but a *constant* Repetition of the Goodness of his Creation; and all the Difference between them is only this, that in the *one* he made all Things *Good*, in the *other* he continues them so. 'Tis true, *God* hath left himself at Liberty when Occasion requires immediately to interpose in the Course of Nature, and to vary from the Order of his Creation. And indeed unless he had done so, he would in a *great* Measure have tyed up his own Hands, and *incapacitated* himself from *Governing* the World; but yet he never makes Use of this Liberty but for very *good* Reason, to
serve

serve some very *great* and *excellent* End of his Government; either to punish some *notorious* Sinner, or some very *sinful* People, that so by their Example *others* may be warned from treading in their Footsteps; or to deliver or preserve some eminently *virtuous* Person, or Nation, that thereby *others* may be encouraged to imitate and transcribe their Virtues; or lastly, to confirm and ratify by some *miraculous* Effects some *necessary* Revelations of his Will to the World: Unless, I say, it be to serve some such *excellent* Ends as these, he never interposes by his *absolute* Power to make the *least* Interruption in the *established* Course and Order of the *Universe*. And as soon as ever he hath obtained the *good* Ends that he aims at, he withdraws his Hand, and immediately remits Things to their *primitive* Course and Order. So that if Gods *Creation* be *good*, as I have largely proved it is, his *Providence* must needs be so too; because it continues the Course and Order of the Creation, and never interrupts, or varies it, unless it be to do some *great* Good to the World. Thus God in his *Providence* doth continually spread forth the *mighty* Wings of his Goodness over all his Creation, and thereby reaches out Perseverance to the Being and the Happiness of every Creature.

2. Another Instance of his doing good in this great Work of his Providence is his continuing Mankind under an awful Sense of Religion notwithstanding the great Degeneracies of human Nature. It is very strange to consider how this heavenly Spark hath been kept alive in the midst of such a vast Ocean of Impiety as hath over-spread the World ; for considering into what monstrous Barbarism Mankind have immerfed themselves, how miserably they have defaced their own Nature, and blotted out their Reason ; infomuch that in several Ages and several Parts of the World they have had scarce any other Remains of Humanity in them, but only their Language and their Shape : I say, considering these Things, it is impossible but all Sense of Religion must long e're now have been extinguished in us, had not the divine Providence from Time to Time been exceeding careful to cherish and revive it : And this it hath done by very strange and extraordinary Methods ; sometimes by inflicting strange and amazing Judgments upon great and notorious Offenders ; sometimes by showering down miraculous Blessings and Deliverances upon virtuous and good Men ; sometimes by raising up eminent Examples and Preachers of Righteousness, such as the

the *Patriarchs* among the *Jews*, and the *Philosophers* among the *Gentiles*; sometimes by making *immediate Revelations* from *Heaven*, and confirming the Truth of them by *miraculous Effects*; and sometimes by permitting *evil Spirits* to appear to possess the Bodies of their *Enthusiasts*, and to deliver *Oracles* by them; which though it sometimes tended to promote *false Religions* among Mankind, yet did always prove *instrumental* to cherish and enliven the Sense and Belief of a *Divinity*. By these and such like *powerful Methods* hath the *good Providence* of *Heaven* from time to time *revived* in us the *dying Sense* of *Religion*, and in *Despite* of *our selves* continually kept us under its *Aw and Restraints*; which if it had not done, we should have immediately run headlong into the most *deplorable Confusions and Disorders*. For not only our *eternal*, but our *temporal Interest* too is bound up in *Religion*; for this is the *Foundation* of all *human Society*, and of all the *Blessings* that redound from it; 'tis *this* that gives *Life and Security* to all those *Pacts and Covenants* by which Men are linked to *one another*, and incorporated into *regular Societies*. For if once Men were abandoned of all *Sense of Religion* they would own no *other Law* but that of *their own Interest*, and esteem themselves no longer obliged by their *Oaths and Covenants*

than 'tis their Interest to keep them ; and he that thinks himself bound to be *honest* no longer than he needs must, will by the same Principle be obliged to be a *Knave* as soon as he can. So that if once Men could disingage themselves from the Sense of *Religion* and the Tyes of Conscience, all those *Pacts* and *Covenants*, which are the *Cement* of *Society*, would presently be dissolved and rendred *insignificant* ; for what will it signify for Men to take *Oaths* and *Covenants* of Fidelity to any *Society*, since whether they take them or no, they will be *faithful* so long and no longer than 'tis their Interest to be so. And this *vital* Cement that unites us being dissolved, our *Society* will soon disband of its own Accord, and we, like the Parts of a *dead* Body having lost the Soul that *united* and held us together, shall immediately disperse *our selves* and fly abroad into Atoms, and out of an *eternal* Distrust and Diffidence of *one another*, having no *Religion* or Conscience to secure *each others* Honesty, shall be forced to withdraw like other Beasts of Prey into Dens and secret Retirements, and there live *poor* and solitary, as *Bats* and *Owls*, and subsist like *Vermin* by robbing and filching from one another. And in this *deplorable* Condition we should be forced to wander about the World *naked* and

and *destitute* both of all the *mutual* Aids and Assistances of *each other*, and of all the *blest* Hopes and supports of *Religion*, which are the only Comforts and Refreshments that in such a *calamitous* State our *wretched* Natures would be capable of. So that without the Sense of *Religion* we should be of all Creatures the most *wretched* and *miserable*. And this the *good God* foresaw very well, which made him so *careful* to inspire us with an *awful* Sense of *Religion*; and when through the Degeneracy of our Nature it was in so much Danger of being utterly extinguished, to awaken and revive it again from Time to Time by the wise and *gracious* Methods of his Providence, that so we might live happily *here* as well as *hereafter*, by enjoying the Blessings of *each others* Society, and the *continual* Supports and Comforts of *Religion*: For it is to him that we owe our Sense of *Religion*, and 'tis to our Sense of *Religion* that we owe all the Conveniencies and Comforts of our Lives. How much Reason therefore have we to *admire* and *adore* the *good* Providence of *God*, that hath taken so much Care of us; that would not suffer us to make *our selves* the most *wretched* and *miserable* of all Beings; that hath been so *vigilant* to rouse and awake us when we were nodding into a *lethargick*

thargick Stupidity, and sleeping away all the Happiness and Comfort of our Lives; in a word, that hath kept *Religion* alive in us in Despight of all our Attempts to extinguish it, and would not suffer us to destroy the Foundation of *our own* Happiness!

3dly. Another Instance of the *Goodness* of God's *Providence* to us, is his supporting of Government in the World, notwithstanding the *violent* Tendency of our *corrupt* Natures to *Anarchy* and Confusion. If we reflect but a little upon the *depraved* Natures of Men, what *ungovernable* Passions they carry about with them, how *sick* they are of every Yoak, and how *impatient* of every Restraint; how greedily they covet an *unbounded* Liberty, and how much the *greatest* Part of Men are of this *violent* Temper; it will afford us matter of *sufficient* Astonishment to think how Government and good Order could be so long preserved as it hath been among such a sort of *mild* and *extravagant* Creatures; especially considering how much more *numerous* the *governed* Party is than the *Governing*, and how apt the Government it self is to be rendred *odious* by *ill* Management, by the Tyranny and Oppression of those that sit at the Stern, and the *perpetual* Factions and *cross* Humours and Interests of the *inferior* Ministers of State ;

I say, considering all these Things, 'tis a Wonder how the *Ship* of Government should live so long as it hath sayled in the midst of such Tempests and *Hurricanes*; and doubtless long ere now it must have been swallowed up in *Anarchy* and Confusion had it not been guarded by the Providence of that *God*, who, as the *Psalmist* tells us; *stills the noise of the Seas, and the noise of their Waves, and the tumult of the People*, Psalm lxxv. 5. And how much his Providence hath been concerned in securing of Government in the World, is evident from the Care it hath taken to keep Men under an awful sense of *Religion*, which is the *main* Foundation upon which Government leans, and without which it must necessarily sink into Ruin and Confusion; for, together with *Religion* away go all Principles of *Loyalty*; and when these are all gone, their Obedience to Government will wholly depend upon their Interest, and consequently whensoever it is their Interest to rebel, they have *no* Obligation at all to restrain them. And as *Providence* hath been very careful to secure the *main* Foundations of Government, so it hath been no less careful to *infatuate* the Councils, and bring to light the *dark* Contrivances, and baffle the *open* Attempts of those that have sought to undermine it; and this in
such

such a *remarkable* manner, that all the World hath taken *peculiar* Notice, and all *Histories* abound with *innumerable* Instances of it. And in all the *Rises* and *Falls* of the *Empires* of the World there hath ever been observed a most *astonishing* Concurrence either of such *happy* or *unhappy* Accidents, as have very much furthered their *approaching* Fates; which is a *notorious* Evidence how much God is concerned in the securing of the Governments of the World, in that he doth so immediatly interpose in their *Rises* and *Falls*; and whensoever in his *just* Displeasure he pulls down *one*, he always takes Care to establish *another* in the Room of it, lest through *too* long *Interregnums* the Nations of the Earth should insensibly crumble into *Anarchy* and Confusion, and finally involve themselves in all the *consequent* Mischiefs of it. For the Subversion of Government, like the opening of *Pandora's* Box, must necessarily let loose a swarm of Miseries into the World; for without Government *wronged* Innocence can never be *righted*, *invaded* Property can never be *retrieved*; but *every* Man will be exposed to *every* Man's Lust, which must immediately involve us into a State of War, in which like so many *Dogs* we should try all our Right by our Teeth, Into such a *miserable* State would Mankind
be

be reduced, if God did not *uphold* the Governments of the World. So that whatsoever Benefits we receive from the Governments under which we live, we owe it all to the *divine* Providence; by whose Procurement it is that *Kings reign, and Princes decree justice*, Prov. viii. 15. 'Tis to this *blest* Cause that we are to attribute our sitting safely under *our own Vines*, and peaceably enjoying the Fruit of our Labours; that we are not banished from *Society*, and exposed to the Spoils and Ravages of those that are *mightier* than our selves; that we are not become more *savage* than Wolves to *one another*, and that the whole World is not converted into a Commonwealth of *Cannibals*: For *this* would be the consequence of the Dissolution of Government, and *that* would be the Consequence in all probability of God's withdrawing his *Providence* from the World.

4thly, And lastly, Another Instance of the Goodness of God's *Providence* to us is its contributing to the Invention and Improvement of all those *useful* Arts and Sciences that are in the World: For if we seriously consider the *prodigious* Numbers of these wherewith the World doth abound, and wherein the Generality of Mankind are employed; we are never able to imagin

gin how they could have all been invented and improved as they are, without the Direction of an *Almighty* Providence. For had not the *divine* Providence prolonged the Lives of the *first* Inventers of them to such a *prodigious* Age as it did, they would not have had Time to collect Experiments enough whereon to found any *certain* Theorems of *natural* Science. How could they have measured the Motions of the *heavenly* Bodies, or given any *tolerable* Account of their *slow* Revolutions, if they had not lived so many *Hundreds* of Years as they did? And though the *Rudiments* of *proportion* are lodged in our Minds, yet it is not imaginable how Men could ever have improved them into so many *various* Practices, of *Arithmetick*, *Musick*, *Geometry*, and *Mechanicks*, had they not been at first either inspired by *God*, or had a *long* Space of Time allowed to reduce them into Rules of Practice. And he that shall but seriously consider how far out of the Road of *ordinary* Experience many of the most *useful* Arts of the World lie, such as *Writing* and *Printing*, by which a Man may talk with his Friend a *thousand* Miles Distance, and converse with the World when he is dead and gone, will find *sufficient* Reason to attribute the Invention of them to the *Sovereign* Direction of the *divine* Providence

vidence ; without which neither am I able to imagin how the *medicinal* Virtues of *sun-dry Herbs* and *Vegetables* and *Minerals* could have been discovered, which now are of *great* Use to us, since even these also do lie exceedingly remote from *common* Observation. And when I also consider how many Things are *requisite* to the compleating of the most *useful humane* Arts, and what Intricacy and *Mystery* there is in them, insomuch that in many Cases we are not able to give any Reason why *this* or *that* Cause in our Art should produce *this* or *that* Effect ; I must needs conclude, that the Invention and Improvement of them hath been exceedingly promoted by the *wise* Providence of God. And what Reason have we to adore and admire its *unspeakabl* Goodness towards us, that by instructing us in so many *excellent* Arts hath not only found *sufficient* Employment for the *greatest* Part of Mankind to subsist by, but hath also taught us mutually to assist *one another* with all Kinds of Commodities and Conveniencies of Life! So that now we want nothing that either *Nature* or *Art* can supply us withall, the *good God* having furnished us, not only with Materials to work upon, but also with Art and Skill to manage and contrive them to the *best* Advantage. One would have
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thought it had been *sufficient* for him to have created a World for us, and therein to have furnished us with all that is *necessary* for our Being and Subistence, and so left it to *our selves* to use and apply his Blessings as we pleased; but that he should condescend to instruct us in so many Arts of improving his Blessings, how to *dress* and *cook* them to the *best* Advantage, and *one* way or *other* to render the *meanest* of them all *useful* and *beneficial* to *our selves* and *others*, is such a *gracious* Condescension of Goodness as for ever deserves our Praise and Admiration. And so I have done with the first thing proposed, which was to shew you what apparent Instances there are of the Goodness of *God* in his Providence towards us.

2. I proceed to the next Thing proposed, which was to shew you that though there be some Things in the World that to us seem to be *very ill* and *hurtful*, yet it is infinitely *unreasonable* for us therefore to suspect the Goodness and Beneficence of *God's Providence*; that because we see such an *unequal* Distribution of good Things to *bad* Men, and *bad* Things to *good* Men, and do find so much Sin and Wickedness in the World, and so great a part of Mankind over-run with so much *Barbarism*, *Superstition*

stition and Idolatry; because, I say, we see and find such Things as these in the World, we have no Reason at all to charge the Providence of God. For let us consider,

1. That the *Irregularities and Evils* which God permits in the World are not the Effects of his Providence, but of the Choices and Actions of *free Agents*.
2. That many Things seem *evil* to us in the World, because we take *false Measures* of *Good and Evil*.
3. That many *other* Things seem *evil* to us in the Course of God's Providence, merely because we often mistake *bad Men* for *good*, and *good Men* for *bad*.
4. That many Things seem *Evil* to us in the Course of God's Providence, because we are acquainted but with a *small Part* of the World, and do judge of what is *good* and *evil* for the Whole by what we find is *good* or *evil* for this *small Part*.
5. That many *other* Things seem *evil* to us in the Course of God's Providence, because we judge of them by their *present sensible* Effects, and are not able to comprehend the *universal* Drift and Connexion and Dependence of them.
6. That many *other* Things seem *evil* to us in the Course of God's Providence,

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meerly because we understand very little of the other World.

1. That the *Irregularities* and *Evils* which God permits in the World are not the Effects of his Providence, but of the Choices and Actions of *free Agents*. That there is such a Thing as *Sin* in the World is by no Means to be charged upon the Providence of God ; for *that* neither commits any Sin *it self*, nor impels or necessitates any others to commit it. *Let no Man say when he is tempted, he is tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any Man*, Jam.i. 13. 'Tis true, he permits us Men, whom he hath made *free Agents*, to act freely ; and if there were no Fault at all in making of *free Agents* (as certainly there was not) what Fault can there be in permitting them to act *congruous* to their own Natures ? And is it *just* that God's Providence should be blamed, because it doth not *metamorphose free Agents* into *necessary* ones ; that is, because he doth not unmake what he hath made, and subvert the Laws of *his own* Creation ? or is it *reasonable* that we who are the only Authors of Sin, should blame the Providence of God for suffering us to be so ? For if Sin be an *Evil*, it is an *Evil* to us ; and consequently we are much more concerned to prevent it,

it, than the Providence of *God*; and if when we may, we will not do it, it is *unreasonable* that we should blame *God* for not forcing us to prevent it whether we will or no. So that all the Quarrel we can have against *God's Providence* is only this, that it doth not tie our Hands, and fetter our Liberty in the Chains of an *Adamantine Necessity*; that is, that he doth not undo *his own Workmanship*, and thereby confess himself overseen in his Creation of us, when there is no kind of Reason for it. For I beseech you, what hurt is it for Men to be made *free Agents*, and left to their own Choice whether they will be *happy* or *miserable*? And if it was no Fault at all for *God* to make us so, what Reason have we to blame him for continuing us what he made us? If therefore while he continues us *free Agents* we will needs chuse what is *evil*, and misemploy the Talent of our *natural Liberty*, the Fault is ours and not *God's*, and we may thank our selves for all the *bad Consequents* of it; and since not only Sin but most of the *other Evils* that are in the World proceed from our *ill Use* of *our own Liberty*, we ought in all Reason to charge them upon our selves, and not upon the *good Providence* of *God*.

2ly, That many Things seem *evil* to us in the Course of *God's Providence* that are

not so in themselves, by Reason that we commonly take *false* Measures of *Good* and *Evil*. We think it a very *great Evil*, for Instance, that *good* Men are not *blest* with *great* Plenty and Abundance, and that *bad* Men are; because we imagin Plenty and Abundance to be a very *great Good*, and the contrary a very *formidable Evil*: And this makes us blame the Providence of *God*, because we see the *good* Things of this World so promiscuously distributed without any Discrimination of Persons; whereas in reality Plenty and Abundance approaches nearer to the Nature of an *indifferent* Thing than of a very *great* and *desirable Good*. For if we consult *our own* Experience, we shall find that all *worldly* Goods are just what we make them, and that they do as commonly prove Plagues as Blessings to the Owners of them; that they *intangle* their Affections, *insnare* their Innocence, disturb their Peace, *provoke* and *pamper* their *extravagant* Lusts, and betray them first into *Luxuries*, then into *Gouts* or *Dropsies*, *Catarrhs* or *Consumptions*; and these most commonly prove the Effects of *outward* Abundance. So that in it self 'tis almost of an *indifferent* Nature, and doth *good* or *Hurt* to us according as we use and improve it; and therefore though *God* sometimes suffers *good* Men

Men to want, and *bad* Men to enjoy it, we have no Cause to quarrel at it ; for he understands the just Value of things, though we do not ; he knows that the *best* of worldly Things are *bad* enough to be thrown away upon the *worst* of Men, and so expresses his scorn of the *admired* Vanities of this World by scattering them with such a *careless* Hand, and indulging the Enjoyment of them to the most *despicable* Persons. So that we ought to conclude, that he sets no *great* Value upon them, since he concerns himself no more in their Distribution ; for why should he partake in the Errors of *vulgar* Opinion by expressing himself so *regardful* of these Trifles as to put them in *golden* Scales, and weigh them out to Mankind by Grains and Scruples ?

3ly, That many *other* Things seem *evil* to us in the Course of God's Providence that are not so, merely because we often mistake *bad* Men for *good*, and *good* Men for *bad*. For I dare say that *that* Observation upon which we ground our Quarrel against the Providence of God, *viz*, that it fares *worst* with the *best*, and *best* with the *worst* of Men, is not half so *general* as we make it ; for it is to be considered that generally we pity the *miserable* and envy the *prosperous*, and these Passions of ours do commonly bribe

our Judgments, and make us think *worse* of the *one* and *better* of the *other* than either of them do deserve. For, those whom we *pity* we are inclined to *love*, and those whom we *love* we are inclined to *think well* of ; and if we *think well* of them whether we have Reason for it or no, we conclude that God ought to be as fond of them as we : As on the contrary, those whom we *envy* we always *hate*, and those whom we *hate* we are inclined to *think ill* of ; and if we think *ill* of them we think that God is obliged to think so too. And because we are so unreasonably inclined by our Passions to pass such *false* Judgments upon Men, is it fit that we should quarrel at God because he doth not judge as unreasonably as our selves ; or because he doth not *reward* and *punish* Men according to the sentence that our *blind* Pity or Envy passes upon them ? If we could but strip *our selves* of all Passion, and were but able to judge of Men, not by what they appear, but by what they really are ; I doubt not but we should find that even in *this* Life it fares *best* with the *best*, and *worst* with the *worst* of Men ; but since we are not *competent* Judges of this Matter, we should have a Care of reproaching the Providence of God with a *Maxim* that hath no *other* Foundation in the Nature
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of things, but our own *fallacious* Observation.

4^{thly}, That many Things seem *evil* to us in the Course of Gods Providence that are not so, because we are acquainted but with a *small* Part of the World, and do judge of what is *good* or *evil* for the Whole, by what we find is *good* and *evil* for this *small* Part. We are never able to comprehend how far the Dominions of the *divine* Providence extend, nor how many Orders of Beings as well *above* as *below* us are concerned in its Empire and Government; but unless we could do this, we cannot be *capable* Judges of what is *good* or *bad* in the *general* Course of its Actions. For that is *good* or *bad* in the Providence of God, that is *good* or *bad* for its whole Empire and Dominion; and though *this* or *that* may be an Inconvenience to *this* or *that* Part of it, yet these *particular* Inconveniencies may be a *great* Convenience to the Whole. As for Instance; suppose a Man should come into the Country of *Syberia*, which is a great Part of the Empire of *Russia*, whither *that* *Emperor* is wont to banish all *great* Malefactors; he would there find the Inhabitants in a most *miserable* Condition, they being there exposed to Hunger and Cold, and *perpetual* Slavery. So that if a Man should

judge of the *whole* Empire by this Part of it, he would conclude *that* Emperor to be a most *savage* Tyrant, and his Country to be the most *miserable* Place in the World ; whereas in Reality all the *other* Parts of *that* Empire are rendred more *happy* by the Miseries of this Place, which serve to strike an Aw into all the *other* Subjects of it, and to restrain them within the Bounds of their Loyalty and Duty. And so unless we had as *full* a Prospect of the whole Dominion of Gods Providence as we have of this *little* Spot of it, we ought not to censure his Government of the Whole by the *little* Inconveniencies that occur in his Government of a Part ; for in such a *vast* Dominion, as God's is, there may be a thousand *good* Reasons, that we know not of, why *some* Parts of it should be more *unhappy* than *others* ; and if in some *particulars* he incommodes *this* Part for the *publick* Commodity of the Whole, we are so far from having any Reason to complain, that we ought in all Justice to praise and adore his Goodness for it. It is enough for us that we understand so much of Gods Nature as we do, and have such *apparent* Instances of his Goodness in the Works of his Creation and Providence ; and therefore if we in this *little* Part of Gods Empire suffer some *small*

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Inconveniencies, we ought to bleſs and adore his Goodneſs for thoſe *greater* Goods we enjoy, and to reſt ſatisfied with *this*, that our *particular* Inconveniencies may for all we know be *great* Conveniencies to the *Publick*.

ſthly, That many *other* Things ſeem *evil* to us in the Courſe of Gods Providence, becauſe we judge of them by their *preſent ſenſible* Effects, and are not able to comprehend the *univerſal* Drift and Connexion and Dependence of them. For, as I have already ſhewn you in the former Diſcourſe on this Argument, there is a *continued* Juncture and Dependence from *fiſt* to *laſt* between all the Actions and Contrivances of *divine* Providence, and *every one* hath a Relation to *every one* from the Beginning to the End of all that *mighty* Chain of Cauſes whereof it conſiſts. So that 'tis impoſſible to judge rightly of *one* Part of Providence ſeparately from the reſt, becauſe we ſee not the Relation it hath either to what went before, or to what is to follow after; and though ſingly conſidered it may be *hurtful*, yet in Conjunction with all the reſt it may be exceedingly *advantageous*. He that looks only on the *fiſt* Links of that *curious* Chain of Providence in the *Hiſtory* of *Joſeph*, will be apt to entertain a
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very *bad* Opinion of the Whole; first he is thrown into a *desolate* Pit, then sold a *Slave*, then falsely accused, then cast into Prison: *Lord*, what a *tragical* Prologue is here! But then take all those Things in Conjunction with what follows, and you shall presently see that Scene clear up, and all those *sad* Preparations ending in a *joyful* Conclusion. And if we consider that most *glorious* Part that ever Gods Providence acted on the Stage of the World, *viz.* the *History* of our *blessed* Saviour; how *dark* and *gloomy* doth the *former* Part of it look, if we view it separately from the Antecedents and Consequents of it? Surely, if any Thing would justify our *hard* Censures of God's Providence, it would be the beholding of such a *rare* and *excellent* Person exposed to so many Miseries and Calamities; to see him cast forth to the *wide* World as a *helpless* Prey to the Rage of his Enemies, to behold him hanging upon the Cross, *deserted* of his Friends, *mock'd* and *tormented* by his *barbarous* Murderers, and in the most *bitter* Agonies breathing out his *white* and *innocent* Soul: O good Lord! What a *dismal* Prospect of thy Providence is here? But stay a little, let us but see the *glorious* Light that in Conclusion broke out of this *dismal* Darkness; first he is *raised* from the *Dead*, then he *ascends*

cends up to Heaven, where at the right Hand of his Father he reigns an eternal King in full Power and Authority to give Gifts unto Men, and bestow those immortal Rewards on them which he purchased for them with his Blood. So that though singly and apart the first Scenes of this great Providence were very dismal and affrighting, yet considered altogether, how beautiful and harmonious doth it appear? So true is that of the Preacher, Eccles. 3. 11. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: Also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. And therefore because we are not able to see from the Beginning to the End of God's Providence, it is an unreasonable Thing for us to censure the Whole, because of some seeming Inconveniences that we see in those Parts of it that lie before us. Let us stay but till the winding up of the Bottom, till all is finished, and Present it one intire Piece to our View, and then we shall have leave to censure, if we can find any Reason for it.

6thly, And lastly, many other Things seem evil to us in the Course of God's Providence which are not so, merely because we understand very little of the other World. It seems to us a mighty Evil in Providence that

that so *great* a Part of the World is left in Darkneſs and Ignorance, and in ſo *great* a Measure deprived of the *vaſt* Advantages of *true Religion* ; but how do we know how God will diſpoſe of them in the *other* World, what Abatements he will make them, and by what Measures he will judge them; whether he will not allow them ſome *farther* Time of Tryal, and ſo make *good* to them *there* whatſoever hath been wanting to them *here* ? But whatſoever he doth or will do, this we may be ſure of, that he will *damn* none but thoſe that are firſt *ſelf-condemned*, but thoſe that *knowingly* and *willingly* miſcarry; and if ſo, then he will exact of them but in Proportion to their Abilities, and will not require *Brick* where he hath given no *Straw*. But which way ſoever he deals with them, to be ſure *firſt* or *laſt* he will not be wanting in any Degrees of Kindneſs to them that are fit either for a *wiſe* Sovereign to grant, or a *reasonable* Subject to demand; and if he will do ſo (as undoubtedly he will) how unreaſonably do we complain of his Providence towards us ? And though in this Life, we ſee many *good* Men reduced to a very *calamitous* Condition, yet how do we know how *neceſſary* this may be to the ſecuring of their Happineſs in the World to come ? For ſince our

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main State and Interest is in that *other* World, there is no doubt but the Providence of *God* over us doth chiefly Respect that; and if so, how unreasonably do we censure it upon the Score of the *present* Evils it exposes us to, when we know so *little* of the *future* State, to which all its Transactions do chiefly relate? Wherefore, let us forbear a while till we come into the *other* World, and understand the *whole* Design and Contrivance; and then we shall see that all will be *right* and *well*, yea and infinitely *better* than ever we could imagine. But for us to censure now, when we know so *little* of our *future* State, which is the *main* and *ultimate* Scope of Providence, is just as if a Man should pass his Judgment on a Picture when he sees nothing of it but some *few* *rude* Lines and very *imperfect* Strokes. Let us have but the Patience to suspend our Judgment a while till *God* hath finished the whole Draught, and given it all its *natural* Colours and Proportions, and then I am sure we shall see Cause enough *forever* to admire his Skill, and adore his Wisdom and Goodness. And thus you see by *apparent* Instances how *good* *God* is in his Providence towards us, and how unreasonable it is for us to censure his Goodness notwithstanding all those *seeming* Evils that happen in the World. And

And now what remains but that with all Humility and Chearfulness we resign up our selves into the Hands of our most *merciful* Father, concluding, as most certainly we may, that whatsoever he doth with us, or howsoever he disposes of us, it will be all for our *good* in the *later* End, if it be not through our own Default. For where can we be safer than in the Hands of an *Omni-potent* and *Omniscient* Goodness, a Goodness that knows what is *best* for us, and wills what it knows to be so, and doth whatsoever it wills. Surely in such Hands our Condition is a thousand times *better* and *safer* than if we had *full* Power to effect *our own* Wishes, and all the Events that concern us were in *our own* Disposal. And if God should shake us *off* from all Dependence on him, and resign up the whole Conduct of our Affairs into *our own* Hands ; if he should say to us, *since you mislike of my Conduct I will no more intermeddle with you, or any thing that concerns you ; take your selves into your own Disposal and manage all your Concernments as you please* : If I say, he should do thus with us, we should be left in a most *forlorn* and *deplorable* Condition, and unless we were wholly abandoned of *our own* Reason as well as Gods Providence, we should on our *bended* Knees resign up all into his Hands

Hands again, and beseech him for his Pity and his Mercy sake to do any Thing with us that will consist with his Goodness; to scourge and chasten us for our Frowardness as much and as long as his own *fatherly* Bowels will endure it; rather then give us up to *our own* Conduct, or leave our Affairs in the Disposal of our own *blind* and *precipitant* Wills. For so long as God is so powerfully and so wisely *good* as he is, it is the Interest of every Creature in *Heaven* and *Earth* to be at his Disposal, and to take up that *self-resigning* Prayer of our Saviour, *Father, not our Wills, but thy Will be done.* For since God wills our *good* as much or more than our selves, it must doubtless be our Interest that *his* Will should take place whensoever it stands in Competition with *ours*; because he doth not only wish well to us as much as we do to our selves, but he knows what is best for us a *great* deal better than we. Wherefore let us learn in all Conditions to repose our Minds in the *good* Providence of God, and to satisfy our selves in its Managment and Disposal of us; for whatsoever Condition it may bring us into whilst we are wandring through this *Vale of Tears*, this is most certainly and eternally true, that God is good, and doth good,

JOHN III. 16.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.

THE *Three first* Topicks from whence I undertook to prove the Goodness of God, I have already handled on *another* Text, and shewed *1st*, from his Nature, *2ly*, from his Creation, and *3dly*, from his Providence, That he is infinitely good. I proceed now to the *4th*, and last, *viz.* from Principles of *Revelation*, the main of which is comprehended in the Text, *God so loved the World, &c.*

It is indeed a most *glorious* Instance of the Goodness of God, that when he had imprinted his Laws upon our Nature in such *legible* Characters, and given them such *apparent* Sanctions in the Nature of Things; having made such a *sensible* Distinction between *Moral Good* and *Evil*, by those *natural good* and *evil* Consequents which he hath inseparably intailed on them: And when Mankind by their *wilful* Wickedness and
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Inadvertency had almost obliterated the Law of their Nature, and extinguished their *natural* Sense of Good and Evil, and immersed themselves in the most *barbarous* Impieties and Immoralities: Notwithstanding all this that he had done for us, and we against our selves, he should still be so *kind* and *compassionate* as to put forth a *new* Edition of his Laws, and reveal his Will anew to us in such an *extraordinary* manner; that when he had implanted a Light in our Natures that was *sufficient* to have directed us into the *several* Paths of our Duty, and we by *our own* Neglect and Abuse of it had almost extinguished this *Candle of the Lord* in us, and consequently involved our selves in *Midnight* Darkness and Ignorance; he should then be so *compassionate* as to hang out a Light from Heaven to us to rectify our Wanderings, and guid our Feet in the Paths we should walk in, was such a *glorious* Expression of his Goodness as for ever deserves our most *thankful* Acknowledgments. But then that he should not only reveal to us what he had before imprinted on our Nature, and we had most unworthily *raised* out and *obliterated*; but also discover so much more to us than ever we did or could have known by the *Light* of our *Nature*; that he should not only repeat his

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former Kindness to us, which we had so shamefully abused, but make such stupendous Additions to it as he hath done in the Revelation of his Gospel; that mauger all those Impieties and Provocations by which for so many Ages we had excited his Patience, he should not only so love us as to restore to us the Light which we had almost extinguished, but to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, &c. is such an amazing Instance of Goodness as can hardly be reflected on without an Extasy of Admiration.

In which Words you have God's revealed Love and Goodness to the World measured by a two-fold Standard.

1. By the *Greatness* of the Gift which he hath bestowed upon the World; *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son:*
2. The *blessed* End for which he did bestow him; *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

I. I begin with the *first* of these viz. the *Greatness* of the Gift, by which the *Greatness* of his Love to us is measured; *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son: & so on, he gave him; that is, he delivered him up from out of his own Bosom and everlasting*

ing Embraces; for so Eph. v. 2. it is *παρὶδωκεν ἑαυτὸν*, *he gave himself for us*, or delivered up himself for us, for so we render the Word *ὁς παρὲς ἑδωκεν διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν*, *who was delivered for our offences*, Rom. iv. 25. Now what a *stupendous* Expression of God's Love this was, will appear by considering these *six* Things, which are all of them expressed or implied in the Text;

1. That he gave him *up* who was not only the *greatest*, but the *dearest* Person to him in the *whole* World.
2. That he gave him *up* for Sinners.
3. That he gave him *up* for a *whole* World of Sinners.
4. That he gave him *up* to become a Man for Sinners.
5. That he gave him *up* to be a *miserable* Man for Sinners.
6. That he gave him to be a *Sacrifice* for the Sins of Sinners, that so he might not only with more Effect but with more Security to us, interceed for our Pardon.

1. The *Greatness* of God's Love and Goodness towards us appears in this, that he gave *up* for our sakes not only the *greatest* but the *dearest* Person to him in the *whole* World; for as the Text tells you, *it was his only begotten Son*. Which *Phrase* doubt-

less imports a much *higher* signification than his being begotten in the *Virgins Womb* by the Overshadowing of the *Holy Ghost*. For though it cannot be denied but in *Scripture* he is called the *Son of God*, sometimes upon the Account of this his *divine* Generation in the *Virgins Womb*, and sometimes upon the Score of his being ordained by *God* to the *Messiaship*; sometimes because he was raised by *God* from the *Dead*, and sometimes because he was installed by him into his *Mediatorial Kingdom*: Yet upon neither of these Accounts can he be properly called the *only begotten Son*; for upon the *three last* Accounts sundry *others* have been as properly begotten by *God* as our *Saviour*; some having been installed by him into *great and eminent* Offices; *others* raised from the *Dead*; *others* truly ordained by him his *Messiah's*, or *appointed* Ones; so that upon neither of these Accounts can he be stiled the *only begotten Son*, others having been thus begotten as well as himself. And as for the *first*, his being conceived by the *Holy Ghost* in the *Virgins Womb*, this was not sufficient neither to intitle him the *only begotten*; because though it was indeed a *miraculous* Production, yet was it not so much above the Production of the *first* Man as to place him in that *singular* Eminence. For the forming of *Adam* out of the
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Substance of the Earth was altogether as *miraculous* a Production as the forming of *Christ* out of the substance of the Woman; and therefore since *Adam* is called the *Son of God*, Luk. 3. 38. because *God* immediately formed him of the substance of the Earth; he had thereby as *good* a Right to the Title of God's only begotten Son as *Christ* himself had; because *God* immediately formed him of the substance of a Woman. Wherefore his *peculiar* Right above all others to this *glorious* Title of God's *only begotten Son* must necessarily be founded upon some *higher* Reason than this, that is, upon some such Reason as is wholly peculiar to himself. For if he be really and truly God's *only begotten Son*, all *other* Persons whatsoever must necessarily be excluded from that Claim; and consequently he must be *so* begotten of *God* as no *other* Person is, or ever was: And to be *so* begotten of *God*, is to be begotten by him by a *proper* and *natural* Generation, which is nothing else but a *vital* Production of *another* in the *same* Nature with him, from whom it is produced; even as a Man begets a Man, and every Animal begets *another* of the same Kind and Nature with it self: And thus to be begotten of *God*, is to be begotten into the same *divine* Nature with himself; to derive or communicate

from him the infinitely *perfect* Nature and Essence of a God. And in this Sense only our *blessed Saviour* is the *only begotten Son of the Father*, as being generated by him from all *Eternity* into the *same* Nature, and communicating from him his own *infinite* Essence and Perfections; in which sense he is truly the *only begotten Son*, because in this Sense, and in this only, none is or was, or ever shall be begotten of the *Father* but *himself*.

When therefore it is said that *he gave his only begotten Son*, the Meaning is this; he gave up that infinitely *great* and *dear* Son of his, that is, his *natural* Image and Resemblance; that *only Son* to whom from all *Eternity* he hath communicated his own most *perfect* Essence and Nature. If then it was so *great* an Instance of *Abraham's* Faith and *ardent Love of God* at his Command to offer up his *only Son Isaac*, a Son, who though how hopeful soever, yet who fell infinitely *shorter* of the Perfection of our *Saviour* than the Light of the *Glow-worm* doth of the Light of the *Sun*; what an *astonishing* Miracle of Love was it in the *great Father* of the World to give up his *only begotten Son*; a Son whom he had begotten in his own *divine* Nature, and to whom he had communicated all the *infinite* Perfections of his
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own Being; a Son who was the most *perfect* Image of himself, who was infinitely *powerful* and *wise* and *good*, and differed from him in nothing but only in being *his Son*; who had the Fulness of the *Godhead* dwelling in him, and whom, being infinitely *perfect* as himself, he loved as infinitely as *his own* Person, and consequently could as easily have given *up* himself for us, as he did, that *dearly Beloved* in whom his Soul was so well pleased? Who but a *God* of *infinite* Love and *immeasurable* Inclination to do good to his Creatures, would have given them such an *inestimable* Jewel out of his Bosom; a Jewel wherein all the Brightness of the *Divinity* did sparkle, and which upon that Account was as *dear* and *precious* to him as his own Life? And hence we find the *Apostle* valuing the Greatness of God's Love to us, by the Greatness and Dearness of the Person whom he gave *up* for our sakes; *in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him*, 1 Joh. iv. 9. And indeed without this Consideration of his being the *only begotten Son* of God by *eternal* Generation and Communion of Nature with him, God's Love in giving him *up* for us would not be comparably so *considerable* as it is. For if, accord-

ing to the Doctrin of the *Socinians*, he should only have caused a Man to be born for us after *another* manner than *other* Men are, and then have delivered him for our sake; there would have been no such *great* Expression of his Love in this Way of redeeming us, more than what must have appeared should he have chosen to redeem us any *other* Way. To have redeemed us indeed, by what Means soever, would have been a most *glorious* Expression of his Love and good Will to us; but since the *Scripture* hath raised the Consideration of God's Love *higher* from the Dignity of the Person whom he sent to redeem us, by how much *higher* the Dignity of this Person is, by so much *greater* is the Estimation of his Love. But if the Dignity of *Christ's* Person, as the *only begotten Son of God*, consisted meerly in being a Man born into the World in such an *extraordinary* Manner, this would have made such an *inconsiderable* Addition to his Love in redeeming us, that he would have much more *agrandized* his Kindness to us to have offered up an *Angel of Heaven* for us, though of the most *inferior* Order, than to have thus delivered *up* his only begotten Son. But to offer up his *natural* Son to whom he had communicated his Nature, his Son who was *God co-eternal and co-essential* with himself

self, was a more *transcendent* Expression of his Love to us, than if he had unpeopled *Heaven* for our sakes, and delivered up to us the whole *Quire* of *Angels*, *Archangels* and *Seraphims*.

2^{ly}, The Greatness of God's Love and Goodness towards us appears in this also, that he gave up his *only begotten Son* for us when we were Sinners: And this is implied in that Expression, *God so loved the World*; that is, the World as it then was, a *base*, *depraved*, and *degenerate* World; for of this very World whom God thus loved, the *Apostle* gives this *extream bad* Character, *the whole World lieth in Wickedness*, 1 Joh. v. 19. And St. Paul distributing the whole World into *Jews* and *Gentiles*, pronounces universally concerning them, *that they were all under Sin*, Rom. iii. 9. So that in giving up his Son for such a World as this, he must necessarily give him for Sinners. And certainly should we measure God's Goodness by *our own*, this Consideration is enough to render his giving his only begotten Son for us a most *incredible* Expression of it; that when by our Sins we had provoked him beyond the Sufferance of any Patience but *his own*; when in Despight of all those *innumerable* Mercies wherewith from Time to Time he had sought to oblige us, and mau-
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ger all those *Stupendous* Judgments with which from *one* Generation to *another* he had endeavoured to curb and restrain us; when he had used so many *effectual* Arts to reclaim and amend us, and we by *our own* Obstinacy had baffled and defeated them all, and in stead of mending grew *worse* and *worse* under all his *powerful* Applications; one would have thought that now at last, in stead of trying any *further* Experiments on us, he might have been sufficiently provoked to give us up, as *Physitians* do their *Patients* when they are past all Hope of Recovery, and so let us alone to perish in *our own* Obstinacy. And doubtless if after all these Provocations we had known that he had intended to send his Son into the World, *our own* Guilt and Conscioufness would have made us conclude that the Design of his sending him was only to ruin and destroy us, to extirpate the whole Race of us from the Face of the Earth, that so his Creation might be no longer *scandalized* with the Remembrance of such a Generation of Monsters. But now that after so many *repeated* Affronts and Rebellions, and in the midst of so many *loud-crying* Guilts that perpetually rang in his Ears, he should still persevere to love us in such a *transcendent* Degree, as to part with what is *nearest* and *dearest* to him

him for our sakes, even his only *begotten* Son out of his Bosom, is such an *astonishing* Expression of his Goodness to us, as we can never sufficiently magnify and admire. Had Mankind been as *innocent* as they are *guilty* before God, had their Virtues been as *great* and as *numerous* as their Crimes were; yet to send his *great* Son down from *Heaven* to visit them, had been such an Instance of *condescending* Goodness in him as would have justly merited our *everlasting* Praise and Remembrance; but to send him down to Sinners, to such a Race of *obstinate* and *incorrigible* Sinners, and that not to destroy but to save them; to obtain for, and tender to them a Kingdom of *immortal* Pleasures, and use all *possible* Means safely to conduct them thither; Lord, what a Miracle of Love is this! And hence the *Apostle* estimates this *prodigious* Instance of the Love of God, by the *Undeservingness* of those upon whom it was exercised; but God, says he, *commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners Christ died for us,* Rom. v. 8.

3dly, The Greatness of God's Love and Goodness towards us appears in this also, that he gave up his *only begotten Son* for the whole World of Sinners; he did not confine and limit this *great* Design of his Goodness

ness by granting a *monopoly* of it to a *few particular* Favourites, but settled it as a *publick* Charter upon the *whole* Corporation of Mankind; for he *so loved the World*, says the Text, *that he gave his only begotten Son*; that is, for the benefit of the World. For how could his giving of his *Son* have been an Expression of his Love to the World, if he had not given him for the *publick* Benefit of the World? Had his Design been to restrain his Gift to a *few particular* Persons, whom he had designed to rescue from the *general* Shipwrack, the Text must have run thus, *God so loved some particular Persons in the World, that he gave up his only begotten Son*. For to make that an Instance of his Love to *all* which he designed only for the Benefit of a *few*, is to pretend a Love to the *greatest* Part of Men which he never intended them; for that by the *World* here he means the whole World, he himself assures us, 1 Joh. ii. 2. *And he is the Propitiation for our Sins: And not for ours only, but also for the Sins of the whole World*. And what he means by the *whole World*, he tells us in the same *Epistle*, 1 Joh. v. *The whole World lieth in Wickedness*. So that this whole World that lies in Wickedness, is that whole World for whose Sins *Christ* is a Propitiation; and that whole World for whose Sins *Christ* is a Propitiation,

tion, is the World whom God so loved, as to give his *only begotten Son* for. But the *Apostle* yet more expressly tells us, that the *head of every Man is Christ*, 1 Cor. xi. 3. And if so, then every Man is a Part of *Christ's Body*; and if so, then every Man hath a Communion in the Benefits of his Blood; for Ephes. v. 23. he is said to be the *Saviour of the Body*; and more expressly yet, Heb. ii. 9. it is said, that *by the grace of God he tasted death for every Man*. So that the *Scripture* hath as *emphatically* declared the *universal* Extent of this great Gift of God's Love, as it was possible for it to do in any *human* Words; and methinks 'tis strange that any Men should presume to restrain it, when they have no *other* Defence for so doing but only an *odd* Distinction that makes the *whole* World to signify the *smallest* Part of it, the *Body of Christ* to import a *few particular* Atoms of it, and *every Man* to denote *one* Man of Ten Thousand.

Behold then the *immense* Goodness of God, that hath not only given up his *Son*, for Sinners, but for a *whole* World of Sinners, and excluded none but those who exclude themselves from the Benefits of this *mighty* Donation! That hath planted this *heavenly Tree of Life* in the midst of a *sick* and *sinful* World, and hath not confined or inclosed

inclosed it for the Use of a *few selected* Patients; but laid it open for all Comers, that whosoever would, might take of its Fruit, and *eat and live for ever*. O good God! How *vast* is thy Love, that hath thus impartially diffused it self over such a *wide* World of Sinners, that in this *stupendous* Gift of thy Son had so *kind* a Respect to every *Individual*, and made no Exception of any how *sinful* and *unworthy* soever, that will but comply with the *merciful* Terms and Conditions of it?

4thly, The Greatness of God's Love and Goodness towards us appears also in this, that he hath given up his *only begotten* Son to become a Man for Sinners. For whatsoever he was upon God's giving him up, he was what God gave him up to be; and therefore since upon God's giving him up he became a Man, it necessarily follows that he gave him up to become so. And indeed since God had such a *merciful* Design as to send his Son into the World to reform and save it, it was highly *convenient* for us, though not for *him*, that he should come to us in *our own* Natures, not only that he might consecrate *human* Nature that had been so miserably *desecrated* and *prophaned*; but also, that he might endear himself to us by the *great* Honour he did us in assuming our
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Natures; and that having our Passions, and being in our Circumstances he might by *his own* Practice give us an Example how to govern the *one*, and how to behave our selves in the *other*. Had he come down from the *Heavens* inrobed with Splendor and Light, and preached his *Gospel* to us in the midst of a *Choir of Angels* from some *bright Throne* in the Clouds, this indeed would have been more *convenient* for him, as being more *suitable* to the *natural* Dignity and Majesty of his Person. But the *All-merciful* Father in the Disposol of his *Son* consulted not so much *his* Convenience as *ours*; he knew well enough that should he have sent his *Son* to us in such an *illustrious* Equipage, his Appearance amongst us would have been more apt to astonish than to instruct us, and to have fixed our Thoughts in a *profound* Admiration of his Glory than to have directed our Steps in the Paths of Virtue and *true* Happiness; and that it would be much more for our Interest that he should conduct us by his Example than *amaze* us by his Appearance; and therefore that he might do so, he sent him to us in *our own* Natures, that so going before us as a Man he might shew us by his Example what became Men to do, and direct us by the Print of his own Footsteps. Since there-

therefore he assumed our Nature purely for our sakes, what a *stupendous* Instance of God's Goodness was this; that for the sake of a World of *miserable* Sinners he should be content that his own most *dear* and most *glorious* Son should condescend to become a Man, and to empty himself into our Nature; that he who by the *Divinity* of his Nature was exalted more above that of the *highest* Angel than *that is above the lowest* Animal, should personally unite himself to a Handful of Dust, and marry his *Divinity* to the Infirmities of our Nature; that he whose Throne was in the *Heavens*, and before whose *sacred* Feet the whole *Choir* of *heavenly Angels* lie prostrate, should abase himself so *low*, as to come down among Mortals, and associate himself with Companions so *unworthy* of him? O *good God*! When thou hast condescended so *low*, what is there thou wilt not condescend to, to do *good* to thy Creatures? But this is not all, you shall see him stoop *lower* yet; For

5thly, The Greatness of God's Love and Goodness towards us appears also in this, that he gave up *his only begotten Son* to become a *miserable* Man for Sinners. It would have been some Abatement to his *mighty* Condescension, if when he sent him down among us in our Nature he had made him

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supream visible Monarch of the World ; if he had crowned him with all the Splendors of an *earthly* Condition, if he had ushered him into the World in a *triumphal* Chariot with all the Kings of the Earth either *prostrate* before him or chained at his Chariot-Wheels : This though a *vast* Condescension in the *eternal* Son, yet would not have been so *low* as it was to be born of a *poor* Mother, to be educated as a *Carpenters* Son, to be exposed to *Want* and *Penury*, to the *Contempt* of every *sordid* Wretch, and the *perpetual* Persecutions of a *barish* and *ill-natured* Rable ; and yet this was the *wretched* State to which *God* humbled his *own dear* Son for our sakes. For the Design of his Humiliation being to raise us, the most *merciful* Father consulted not so much what was for his Ease, as what was for our Benefit ; for he knew well enough that should he have introduced him into the World in *earthly* Pomp and Magnificence, it would not have been so *well* for us ; that we were *too* Ambitious already of the Vanities of this World, and that *that* had been the *great* Snare that had intangled and ruined us ; and that therefore it was *necessary* when his *Son* came among us, he should take us off from our *over-eager* Pursuit of them, disgrace and expose them to us by his own *voluntary* Refusal of them ;

that by seeing him trample on them when they lay all at his Feet we might learn to despise them, and be at length convinced what *foolish* Bargains we make when we sell our Innocence and our Happiness for such *insignificant* Trifles. He thought it much more *necessary* for us, that his *Son* should exercise his Virtue than display his Greatness among us ; and therefore he placed him in such Circumstances of *human* Life, wherein by his own Example he might copy out to us the *noblest* Pattern of *holy* living. For of all States, that of Affliction affords the *largest* Sphere to exercise *human* Virtue in ; and therefore in this State out of his *good* Will to us he placed his own Son, that herein he might set us a Pattern of Obedience to *Superiors*, and *Contempt* of the World ; of *Patience* and *Courage* and *Meekness* and *Resignation* to the Will of God ; that so by his Example we might be excited to the Exercise of all those *passive* Virtues, which are not only most *glorious*, but most *difficult* to *human* Nature ; and that by beholding how *mean* and yet how *good* he was, we might all become more *ambitious* of being *good* than *great* in the World.

Now what an *amazing* Instance of God's Goodness is this, that meerly for our sakes, and to promote our Happiness ; he should depress

depress his own *Son* into such a *miserable* Condition, that he who was in the *Form of God*, who thought it no *Robbery* to be equal with *God*; should, by the Appointment of his own *Father* to whom he was so infinitely dear, make himself of *no Reputation*, take on him the *Form of a Servant*, become a *Man of sorrows*; and acquaint himself with *Griefs*; and all this to put himself into a *better Capacity* of doing *good* to the *World*? *Good God!* When I consider with my self that once there was a *Time* when thou didst send thy *blessed Son* from *Heaven* to assume my *Nature*; that therein he dwelt upon this *Earth* and conversed with such *poor Mortals* as my self; that he suffered himself to be despised and persecuted, and by thy own Appointment wandred about like a *poor Wretch naked and destitute* of all those *Comforts* which I abundantly enjoy; and all this that he might the more effectually do *good* to a *World of ill-natured Sinners*, methinks this *wonderous Prodigy of Love* not only *puzzles* my *Conceit*, but outreaches my *Wonder and Admiration*: And though it be a *Love* that exceeds my *largest Thoughts*, such as I have *infinite Cause* to rejoyce in, but could never have had the *Impudence* to expect; yet while I stand *gazing* on it, methinks I am like one that is

looking down from a *stupendous* Precipice, whose Height fills me with a *trembling* Horror and even oversets my Reason.

6thly, And lastly, The Greatness of God's Love and Goodness towards us appears also in this, that he gave his *only begotten Son* to be a *Sacrifice* for the Sins of *miserable* Sinners; and this is plainly implied in that Expression, *he gave his only begotten Son*: For in the two Verses foregoing the Text, our *Saviour* foretells his own Death; for as *Moses*, saith he, *lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness*, even so must the Son of Man be *lifted up*: That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal Life; and then it immediately follows, for God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son, that is, he gave him to be lifted up upon the Cross, even as the Serpent was lifted up by *Moses* in the Wilderness; that so by his *precious* Death and Sacrifice he might make an Atonement for the Sins of the World: And accordingly he is said to be *delivered up for our offences*, Rom. iv. 25. even as the Sacrifice was delivered up at the Door of the Tabernacle to propitiate God for the Sins of the Offerer. For to compleat the *propitiatory* Sacrifices under the Law three Things were requisite; first, the offering of it at the Door of the Tabernacle; the
slaying

slaying of it, and the *presenting* of its Blood either within the *Holy of Holies*, or elsewhere, all which were found in the Sacrifice of our *blessed Saviour*. First, he offered himself to God as a *willing Victim* for the Sins of the World. Hence Joh. xvii. 19. *for this cause*, saith he, *do I sanctify my self*, that is, offer up my self as a Sacrifice to thee; for so in Levit. xxii. 2, 3. and sundry other places, to *hallow* or *sanctify* any Thing to the Lord denotes the offering it to him in Sacrifice. And accordingly we find that *that Prayer* by which *Christ* consecrated himself to the Lord, Joh. xvii. was much like that by which the *High Priest* did consecrate his Victims before the Altar on the *great day* of Expiation; for as he, before he slew the Sacrifice, did *first* commend himself and *his own Family*; then the Family of *Aaron* and the whole Congregation to the Lord; so our *Saviour*, in this *excellent Prayer* whereby he sanctified himself to his Father a Sacrifice for the Sins of the World, *first* commended *himself* to him, then his *Apostles*, then all those who should afterwards believe in his Name; which having done, he went forth presently to the Place where he was apprehended, and carried to Judgment and condemned to Death. Then as a *propitiatory* Sacrifice he was slain for our sins, for

fo St. Peter tells us, Ephes. ii. 24. *he bore our Sins in his own Body on the Tree ;* that is, that *natural Evil* of a most *shameful* and *painful* Death was inflicted on him for our Sins, that so he might make an Expiation for them, and free us from the Guilt and Punishment that was due to them. Hence in that *Prophecy* of him, Isa. liii. we often meet with such Expressions as these, *surely he hath born our Grievs, and carried our Sorrows ; he was Wounded for our Transgressions, he was Bruised for our Iniquities : The chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and with his Stripes we are Healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all : For the transgression of my people was he stricken : Thou shalt make his Soul an offering for Sin, and he shall bear their Iniquities : He was numbered with the Transgressors, and he bare the sin of Many, and made intercession for the Transgressors : All which Expressions do plainly imply that what he suffered he suffered for our Sins as a Sacrifice substituted in the Room of us who were the Offenders, that so he might make Expiation for us, and obtain our Pardon from his Father. And accordingly in the New Testament he is said to be made a Curse for us, to be our Ransom and Propitiation, to redeem and reconcile us, and obtain the Remission of our Sins by his Blood ; to die for*

for us and for our Sins, and to be our *Propitiation*; all which Expressions being applied to the *Sacrifices of Atonement* under the *Law*, and from them derived upon our *Saviour* do plainly denote him to be a Sacrifice of Atonement for the Sins of the World. And then lastly, there is the presenting of his Blood for us in *Heaven*, and in the Virtue thereof his interceeding for us with his Father, And hence the Blood of *Christ*, as it is now presented in *Heaven*, is called the *blood of Sprinkling*, which speaketh better things than that of *Abel*, Heb. xii. 24. In which he plainly alludes to the *High Priest's* sprinkling of the Blood of the Sacrifice in the *Holy of Holies*, which was a Type of *Christs* presenting his Blood for us in *Heaven*, as you may see, Heb. ix. 7. compared with the 11th and 12th Verses. Verse 7th he tells us that the *High Priest* entered not into the *Holy of Holies* without blood: But then Verse 12th it is said that *Christ* with his own blood entred in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us. And in Virtue of this Blood, which he poured out as a Sacrifice of our Sins upon the Cross, he now pleads our Cause at the right Hand of his Father, and ever lives to make Intercession for us. So that you see the Death of *Christ* had in it all the necessary

Ingredients of a *propitiatory* Sacrifice for the Sins of the World ; and having so, what a *prodigious* Instance is it of the Love of God to us, that rather than destroy us, he would give up his own *Son* to be a Sacrifice for us ? I do not deny, but if he had pleased he might have pardoned and saved us without any Sacrifice at all ; but he knew very well that if he should do so, it would be much worse for us. He knew that if he should pardon our Sins without giving us some *great* Instance of his *implacable* Hatred of them, we should be *too* prone to presume upon his Lenity, and thereupon to return again to our *old* Vomit and Uncleaness ; and therefore though it would have been more for the Ease and Interest of his *blessed* Son to have pardoned us without any Sacrifice at all, yet such was his Love to us, that because he foresaw that this Way of pardoning would prove *fatal* and *dangerous* to us, he was resolved that he would not do it without being moved thereunto by the *greatest* Sacrifice the World could afford him, and that no *less* a Propitiation should appease his Wrath against Offenders than the Blood of his own Son ; that so by beholding his Severity against our Sins in this *unvaluable* Sacrifice of the Blood of his *Son*, we might be sufficiently terrified
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from returning again to them, by the very same Reason that moved him to pardon them; that we might not think light of that which God would not forgive without such a *vast* Consideration, but might tremble to think of repeating those Sins, the Price of whose Pardon was the *dearest* Blood of the Son of God. Hence is that of the *Apostle*, Rom. iii. 25, 26. *whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness, that is, his righteous Severity against Sin, for the remission of Sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his Righteousness; that he might be just, that is, sufficiently severe against the Sins of Men so as to warn them from returning, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* So that now he hath reduced Things to an excellent Temper, having so provided, that neither himself nor we might be damnified; that we might not suffer by our doing again what we have done; and that he might not suffer by our doing still the same; that he might be what he is, a *pure* and a *holy* Saviour; and that we might be what we ought, *dutiful* and *obedient* Subjects. Now what an *amazing* Instance of God's Love is this, that he should so far consult the *good* of his Creatures as to Sacrifice his own Son

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to their Benefit and Safety? How inexpressibly must he needs love us, that for our sakes could behold his most *dearly beloved Son* hanging on the Cross, *covered with Wounds and Blood, forsaken by his Friends, despised and spit on by his Barbarous Enemies*; that could hear him complain in the Bitterness of his Soul, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And yet suffer him to continue under that *unsufferable Agony* till he had given up his *white and innocent Soul* an *unspotted Sacrifice* for the Sins of the World: Yea, that notwithstanding the *infinite Love* that he bore him, and the *piteous Moans* that his Torments forced from him, was so far from relieving him, that for our sakes he inflicted upon him the *utmost Misery* that *human Nature* could bear; that so having an *experimental Sense* of the most *grievous Suffering* that Mankind is liable to, and being touched with the *utmost Feeling* of our Infirmities, and in all Points tempted like unto us, he might carry a more *tender Commiseration* for us to Heaven, and know the *better* how to pity us in all our Grievs and Extremities. For *in all things it behoved him*, saith the Apostle, *to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest*, Heb. ii. 17. Hear O Heavens, and give

give Ear O *Earth*, and let all the Creation attend with Astonishment to this *stupendous* Story of Love, which so far exceeds all the *heroick* Kindnesses that ever any *Romance* of Friendship thought of, that no *less* Evidence than that of Miracles could have ever rendred it credible. Well then might the *Apostle* say, *herein is love, not that we loved God, for after such vast Obligations this is no great Wonder, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our Sins*, 1 Joh. iv. 10. And thus you see what an *unspeakable* Instance of the Love of God, his giving his *only begotten Son* is. I shall now conclude this Argument with a few *practical* Inferences from the whole.

1. From hence I infer what *monstrous* Ingratitude it would be in us to deny any Thing to God that he demands at our Hands, who hath been so *liberal* to us as to give up his *only begotten Son* for our sakes. O blessed God! If it were *possible* for us to do or *suffer* for thee a thousand Times *more* than at *present* we are able, what a *poor* Return were this for the Gift of thy Son, that *unspeakable* Expression of thy Goodness? And can we deny thee any Thing after such an Instance of Love; especially when thy Demands are so *gentle* and *reasonable*? When he requires nothing of us but what is for
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our good, and the Requital he demands for all his Love to us, is only that we should love our selves, and express *this* Love in doing those Duties which he therefore enjoyns, because they tend to our Happiness; and avoiding those Sins which he therefore forbids, because he knows they will be our Bane and Poyson? Can any of my Lusts be as dear to me as the *only begotten Son* was to the Father of all things? And yet he parted with him out of Love to me; and shall not I part with these for the Love of him? How can we pretend to any Thing that is *modest* or *ingenuous*, *tender* or *apprehensive* in *humane* Nature, when nothing will oblige us, no not this *astonishing* Love of God in sending his *Son* from *Heaven* to *live* and *die* Miserably for our sakes? Lord! What do thy *holy* Angels think of us? How do thy *blessed* Saints resent our Unkindness towards thee? Yea, how justly do the *Devils* themselves reproach and upbraid our Baseness; who, *bad* as they are, were never so much *Devils* yet as to make an *ungrateful* Return of such a *vast* Obligation?

2ly, From hence I infer how *desperate* our Condition will be if we defeat the End of this Gift of the *Son* of God, and render it *ineffectual* to us. For God hath no more Sons to bestow upon us, he being the *only begotten*

begotten of his Father ; *Heaven* and *Earth* are not able to furnish him with such another Gift to bestow upon us ; and if he should lay a Tax upon all his Creation to raise one great Contribution to the Happiness of Mankind, and exact the utmost of every Creature that it is able to Contribute, it would all fall infinitely short of what he hath done for us in this *inestimable* Gift of his own Son. So that if this prove *ineffectual*, it is beyond the Power of an *omnipotent* Bounty to relieve us. For though *God* can do all Things that can be well and wisely done, and do not imply a Contradiction ; yet this can be no Relief at all to us, who reject his Son, and refuse to be made *happy* in the *gracious* Method which he hath prescribed to us. For after this *mighty* Gift of his own Son to save us according to the Method of his *Gospel*, there remains nothing more to be done for us, but either to save us whether we will, or no ; or else to make us *happy* in our Sins, and save us notwithstanding our Continuance in them ; the former of which can neither be well nor wisely done, because by saving us against our Wills he must deal with us in such a Way as is *repugnant* to that Law of Liberty that is implanted in our Natures, and use us not as *Free*, but as *Necessary* Agents. And if considering all things

things, it was *best* and *wisest* that he should make us *free* Agents, then it can neither be well nor wise to govern us as *necessary* ones ; since by so doing he must alter the Course of our Nature, and consequently swerve and decline from what is *best* and *wisest* ; which would be to do Violence to the Perfection of his own Nature. And then as for the *latter*, he cannot do it ; because it implies a Contradiction. For to make Men *happy* in their Sins, is to make them *happy* in their Miseries ; Misery being as *inseparable* from Sin as Heat is from Fire, and as intimately related to it as the *Son* is to the *Father* ; and consequently he may as possibly make a *Father* without a *Son*, as a Sinner without Misery. When therefore God hath done all for us that can possibly be done, and we by *our own* Obstinacy have rendred all *ineffectual*, we are beyond the Power of Remedy, and must necessarily perish in our Sins. And when we have no *other* Hope to depend on but this, that the *All-wise* God will *undo* his own Workmanship, and *unravel* our Nature by governing us contrary to the most *wise* Constitution of it ; or that the *All-powerful* God will effect Impossibilities, and do *that* for us which is not an Object of Power, how *deplorable* and *desperate* must our Condition be ? Wherefore, as you would
not

not run your selves beyond the Reach of all Mercy, and *excommunicate* your own Souls from all Hope of Salvation, be now at last persuaded to comply with Christ's Coming, which was to reduce you from the Error of your Ways, and to bring you to a *serious* Repentance.

JOHN

JOHN III. 16.

*That whosoever believeth in him,
should not perish, but have everlast-
ing Life.*

IN these Words you have the Love of God measured by a *twofold* Standard ; *first* by the Greatness of the Gift which he hath bestowed upon the World, God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son ; *Secondly*, by the blessed End for which he did bestow him, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, &c.* The *first* of these I have already gone through, and now I shall proceed to the *Second*, viz. The blessed End for which he gave his only begotten Son, *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

In which Words you have also *two* very great Instances of God's *infinite* Love and good Will to Mankind ; the *First* is his imposing upon us such a *gentle*, and *easy*, and *merciful* Condition, *That whosoever believeth in him.* *Secondly*, His proposing such a *vast* Reward to us upon our performing of this Condition.

I begin with the *first*, viz. His imposing upon us such a *gentle* and *easy*, and *merciful* Condition, *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish*. In the Management of which I shall do these two Things:

1. Shew you what it is that is included in *this* Condition, *whosoever believeth in him*.

2. How *good* God hath been to us in making the Condition which he hath imposed upon us so *gentle* and *merciful*.

1. What is it that is included in *this* Condition? To which I answer in *general*, that *believing in Christ* doth not only denote a *naked* Assent to the Truth of this Proposition, *That he is the Son of God*, and the Messenger of Gods Mind and Will to the World, and the *Saviour* of Mankind; but that it also includes whatsoever is naturally *consequent* thereunto. For thus it is very *ordinary* with the *Scripture* to express the *natural* Effects and Consequents of things by their Causes and Principles. *This is the love of God*, saith the Apostle, *that we keep his Commandments*, 1 Jo. v. 3. whereas in strictness of Speaking, our keeping his Commandments is only the Effect or Consequence of our loving him. So Prov. viii. 13. *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil*; whereas indeed this is only

the Effect, or Consequence of the Fear of the Lord. Thus by *knowing*, and *hearing*, and *remembring* of God the Scripture usually expresses the *consequent* Effects of them, Thus Act. xxii. 14. *The God of our Fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his Will*; that is, that thou mayst not only know it, but by thy Knowledge mayst be suitably affected with it; (for it was not to a *bare contemplative* Knowledge of it that St. Paul was chosen:) and then it follows, *and see that Just one, and shouldst hear the voice of his Mouth*; that is, that hearing the Voice of his Mouth, thou shouldst thereby be induced to obey it; for he was not meerly to hear *Christ* speaking to him out of the *Heavens*, but that hearing him he might submit to his Will, and become his *Apostle* to the World. Many other Places I might easily give you, where the *natural* Effects and Consequents are in Scripture expressed by their Causes and Principles. And thus also *Faith* or *Believing* whensoever it is used in Scripture to signify the Condition of the *Gospel-Covenant* always imploies its *natural* Effects and Consequents, that is, *sincere* and *universal* Obedience to those Rules of *Holy Living* which the *Gospel* prescribes; for this is the most *natural* Effect of our believing in *Jesus Christ*. And
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hence it is called *the obedience of Faith*, Rom. xvi. 26. that is, the Obedience which springs from Faith, as from its Cause and Principle; And accordingly, Rom. x. 16. you find that to *believe* and to *obey* the Gospel signifies one and the same Thing; But they have not all obeyed the Gospel, saith he; for Esaias saith, *Lord, who hath believed our report?* that is, who hath believed it, so as to obey it? So that wheresoever *Faith* is mentioned singly as the Condition of the Gospel-Covenant, it is apparent it must be understood in the *largest* Sense, as comprehending that Obedience which is the Effect and Consequence of it. So 1 Joh. v. 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*; that is, whosoever so believes the Truth of this Proposition as to practise upon it, and govern his Life and Actions according to the Tenour and Direction of it, is truly a Child of God. For he who believes *Christ* to be the *Messias*, but continues obstinately *disobedient* to his Laws, is so far from being truly and really a Child of God, that he thereby becomes ten Times more a Child of the Devil; for, saith the Apostle, *If I have all Faith, and have not Charity, I am nothing*; and Gal. v. 6. *For in Jesus Christ neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by*

Love; and if so, then *Faith* it self is nothing abstracted from this *blessed* Effect of it, i. e. *working by love*: For in Gal. vi. 15. he tells us that *Circumcision is nothing, but the new Creature*; by which *new Creature* he means an *obedient Temper and Disposition of Mind*, as he plainly tells us, 1 Cor. vii. 19. *Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the Commandments of God*. So that by these different Variations of expression it is apparent, that by *Faith* as significant in the Account of *Christ*, he always means a *working Faith*, the Effect of which is the *new Creature*, or *keeping the Commandments of God*. And so I have done with the *first* Thing proposed, which was to shew you what is included in *this* Condition, *whosoever believeth in him*, which you see is not to be confined to a *bare and naked* Belief of him, but must be extended further, even to that *whole* Course of Obedience which is the *natural* Effect of such a Belief. So that whosoever believes in him, is as much as if he had said, *Whosoever so believes in him, as sincerely and universally to obey him*.

2. I proceed now to the *next* Thing, which was to shew you how good God hath been to us in making the Condition which he hath imposed upon us, so *gentle and merciful*;

ciful; and this will appear if we consider these five Things.

1. That he hath put nothing into *this* Condition but what is in its *own* Nature exceeding *good* for us.
2. That he hath most mercifully *proportioned* the Whole to the *present* State and *Circumstances* of our Nature.
3. That he hath rendred the Whole almost necessarily *consequent* to our believing in *Jesus Christ*.
4. That to beget that *Belief* in us, he hath given us the most *plain* and *convincing* Evidence.
5. That to render this Belief *operative*, he hath engaged himself to *assist*, *actuate*, and *inliven* it by his *own immediate* Concurrence.
6. That *God* hath put nothing into *this* Condition but what is in its *own* Nature exceeding *good* for us. For there is no Precept in all the *Gospel* but what contains either some *effectual* Means or *apparent* Instance of what is *morally* and *eternally* Good; and whatsoever is *morally* good is *naturally* so. For the moral Goodness of Things consists in the *Fitness* and *Reasonableness* of them, and that which is the *moral* Good, or Duty of Men consists in doing that which is *eternally* *fit* and *reasonable* for them, con-

sidering the Frame and Circumstances of their Natures, and the *different* Relations wherein they are placed in the World. But now for Men to do what is eternally *fit* and *reasonable*, is naturally good for and *beneficial* to themselves; because by so doing they *perfect* and *advance* their Natures, and accomplish their own Satisfaction and Happiness. For our Reason being that *proper* Character of our Natures that distinguishes us from all *sublunary* Beings, and sets us in a Form of Being above them; the Perfection of our Nature must necessarily consist in being perfectly *reasonable*; in having our *Understandings* informed with the Principles of *right* Reason, and our *Wills* and *Affections* regulated by them; and when once we are released from the Slaveries of Sense and Passion, and all our Powers are so perfectly subdued to this *superior* Principle of Reason, as to do every Thing that it *commands*, and nothing that it *forbids*, and we *chuse* and *refuse*, and *love*, and *hate*, and *hope*, and *fear*, and *delight*, according as *right Reason* directs and dictates; then, and not till then we are come to the *full* Stature of *perfect* Men in *Christ Jesus*. Now all the Duty of the Gospel being a *reasonable Service*, as the Apostle calls it, *Rom. xii. i.* the End and Tendency of it must be to *habitu-*

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ate us to live according to the Laws of *right* Reason, which is all one as to advance us to the Perfection of *reasonable* Beings; and being once arrived at *this*, we shall find *unspeakable* Satisfaction from within our selves, and feel a *Heaven* of Joys springing up within *our own* Bosoms. For when once our *disjointed* Powers are set in Order, and all our Faculties reduced to their *natural* Subordination, our Nature will be in *perfect* Rest and Ease, being freed from that *unnatural* Violence and Oppression under which it now groans, and cured of all those *Spasms* and *Convulsions* of Mind which are the *inseparable* Effects of its Lapse and Degeneracy. And all the Motions of our Wills and Affections being regulated by the *eternal* Reason of our Minds, with what *delightful* Relishes and *sweet* Gusts of Pleasure shall we taste and review *our own* Actions, they being always such as our *best* and *purest* Reason doth approve of with a *full* and *ungainsaying* Judgment? So that God's Commands, you see, being all of them most *reasonable* must necessarily tend to the Perfection and Happiness of our Nature; besides, that they generally promote even our *sensitive* Happiness, our *Pleasure*, and *Profit*, and *Reputation* in *this* World. Now what a most *endearing* Instance is this of

God's Goodness towards us, that he should make our Benefit the Measure of our Duty, and oblige us to nothing but what is for our *good*; that he should so far concern himself in our Happiness, as to impose it upon us under the Penalty of his *severest* displeasure, and to enforce his Laws with such *inviting* and such *dreadful* Sanctions, only to secure us from running away from *our own* Mercies? So that to be a *Christian*, is in Effect nothing else but only to be obliged to be *kind* to our selves, and bound in Conscience to be *happy*: Good God, that thou shouldst be so infinitely *Zealous* of our Welfare as to make the Means of it the only Matter of thy Laws, and to promise such *vast* Rewards, and *denounce* such *dreadful* Punishments against us for no *other* Reason but only to *affright* and *allure* us out of Misery into Happiness! That thou shouldst *hate* our Sins so implacably, only because they are our *irreconcilable* Enemies, and be so infinitely *pleased* with our Obedience, only because it leads to our *endless* Bliss and Perfection! And that it is thus, is so *plain* and *apparent*, that we cannot but acknowledge it a most *convincing* Instance of God's *infinite* Goodness towards us,

2ly, That God hath most mercifully proportioned *this* Condition to the *present* State
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and Circumstances of our Nature. He saw very well into what a *deplorable* Condition *humane* Nature was reduced; how its Strength was *broken*, and its Health and Vigor *impair'd* and *decayed*; how its Reason was *clouded*, and all its Faculties *depraved*; how apt it was to be *surprized*, and to act unadvisedly; sometimes for Want of Time, sometimes for Want of Order and *Distinction* in its Thoughts; how much it was *hindred* from acting regularly by *intervening* Accidents, and how it was *weakened* and *determined* by the *bad* Habits and Necessities it had generally contracted: and seeing it reduced to this *sad* State, he hath most graciously accommodated its Burthen to its Strength, and taken Measure of its Duty by its Ability to discharge it. For though in his Gospel he requires that we should *perfect holiness in the fear of God, and be perfect, as our Father in Heaven is perfect*, that is, that we should advance to the *utmost* Degrees and Improvements in Virtue that our Natures are capable of; yet he requires this of us under such *moderate* Penalties as are no ways *destructive* to our *eternal* Happiness, such as the *hiding* his Face from us, and other such like *paternal* Severities and Castigations; his correcting us with the Rod of *temporal* Judgments, and abating us in the Degrees

Degrees of our *future* Happiness proportionably to our *moral* Defects and Non-improvements, which Penalties though they are *sufficient* to *quicken* our Endeavours, and excite us still to a *farther* Progress from *one* Degree of Virtue to *another*; yet are they not such as do *excommunicate* us from *Heaven*, or *disseize* us of the Reward of our *honest* and *sincere* Obedience. And indeed should God have been *severe* in marking what we do amiss, and exacted of us under the Penalty of Damnation the *utmost* Degrees and Improvements that are *possible* for us to attain, no Flesh would be saved; it being *morally impossible* for us in this *degenerate* State to do always the *utmost* Good, or avoid the *utmost* Evil that we are able; and therefore out of a *tender* Regard to the Weakness and Infirmary of our Nature, he hath only forbid those Neglects and Miscarriages under this Declaration that they are *inconsistent* with the Sincerity of our Submission and Obedience to him. But as for our *moral* Defects and Infirmities and Surprises, though so far as it is in our Power to avoid them, they are truly Sins against the Law of Perfection, and as such we ought to lament, and beg Pardon for them; yet, Thanks be to a *merciful* God, we shall only be chastened for them here, that we may not be condemned with the
World

World, as the *Apostle* expresses it, 1 Cor. xi. 32. and reap *less* Happiness in the *other* World for having sowed *less* Degrees of good than we might, and ought to have done in *this*; as the same *Apostle* in 2 Cor. ix. 6. 'Tis true indeed, as for *wilful* Sinners, he hath concluded them (as it is very reasonable he should) under the Sentence of *eternal* Death; for should he let *such* go unpunished, he must e'en resign up his Government, and leave the *wretched* World in a State of *Anarchy* and Confusion; but yet to these he hath extended as much Kindness, as was possible for a *wise* and *gracious* Governour to do; for he hath not so irrecoverably concluded them under this *direful* Sentence, but that still he doth indulge to them the *saving* Remedy of Repentance, having for the sake of *Jesus*, and his *all-sufficient* Propitiation bound himself by Promise to pardon and receive into his Favour every *wilful* Sinner in the World, if he will but repent of what is *past*, and amend for the *future*. Thus to save the *miserable* World he hath gone to the *utmost* Borders of what is *fit* and *reasonable*, and done as much for us as it was *possible* for the Justice and Rectitude of his Nature to admit of; for should he have proceeded any further he must have pardoned *impenitent*, Sinners which he could not have done with.

without allowing and encouraging their Rebellion: And to pardon an Offendor that persists in his Fault; that is neither sorry for it, nor willing to amend it, is utterly *incongruous* to all wise Rules of Government, and cannot be practised by any Government either *divine* or *humane* without endangering its own Foundations. What then is there beyond this that we can modestly ask, or God wisely grant? If God had summoned us to his *Privy Council* in Heaven, and there promised to grant us any Terms of Salvation that we our selves could think fit to propose to him, surely the *utmost* that any *modest* Man could have asked would have been only this; Lord! Be but so merciful as to consider the Weakness and Infirmary of our Natures so as not to cast us off for every Neglect or Miscarriage that was only possible for us to avoid: And if at any time we should be such Wretches as knowingly and wilfully to Offend thee, be but so gracious as to receive us again into thy Favour whensoever we heartily repent and amend: This is the utmost that we can request at thy Hands, and for this we will praise thee on the bended Knees of our Souls, and adore thy Goodness for ever and ever: Why now all this he hath freely granted us of his own Accord; and is not this a most amazing Instance of his Goodness, that

that of his own *free* Motion he should thus indulge to us the *utmost* Mitigations that we could have modestly desired, and condescended so far to our Weakness, that without an *unpardonable* Impudence we cannot desire him to condescend yet further.

3dly, That he hath rendred the Performance of the *whole* Condition of our Salvation almost necessarily *consequent* to our believing in *Jesus Christ* : For in that Revelation of his Will which he hath made by *Jesus Christ* he hath pressed the Performance of *this* Condition upon us with such *irresistible* Arguments, as must needs prevail wheresoever they are heartily believed and duly considered. What Man can be so *stupid* as to trample upon Christ's Law, that firmly believes and considers those *glorious* Rewards it proposes to all that sincerely obey it? What pleasures of Sin can seduce *that* Man from his Duty who is firmly persuaded that after a *few* Moments Obedience he shall swim in Rivers of Pleasures that flow from God's right Hand *for evermore*? How can any Man have the Courage to *violate* the Laws of our *Saviour*, who heartily believes and considers those *direful* Punishments which he hath denounced against the Transgressors of them? And what Evils

vils or Miseries can scare *that* Man from his Duty, that is chained so *fast* to it by the Consideration of that Wrath of God which is revealed from *Heaven* against all Unrighteousness and Ungodliness of Men? How can any Man love his Sins any longer, that believes and reads that *bloody* Story of them that is written in the *Agony* and *Passion* of the *Son of God*? When we consider that he was delivered for our Offences, and that our Sins were the *principal* Actors of all that *woful* Tragedy; that they were these that *betrayed*, *arraigned*, and *condemned* him; that *borrowed* the Throats of a *barbarous* Rabble to cry out *Crucify him, Crucify him*; that *buffeted* and *scourged* him with the Hands of the *rude* Soldiers; that *gored* his Sides with the Spear, *pierced* his Temples with the Thorns, *rent* his *sacred* Hands and Feet with the Nails that fastned him to the Cross; how can we believe and consider that our Sins did thus barbarously treat the *best* Friend we have in the World without being all *inflamed* with Indignation against them? Again, how can we reflect upon that *dreadful* Displeasure God expressed against our Sins in this *dismal* Example of Sacrificing his own *Son* for them, without being filled with Horror, and struck into a *trembling* Agony at the Thought of them?

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Once more, How can we be so desperately *fool-hardy* as to go on in our Sins, if we believe and consider the Article of the *Day of Judgment*, wherein we must give an Account of whatsoever we have done in the Flesh whether it be *good*, or *evil*, and *stand* or *fall* to all *Eternity* according as we have discharged or neglected this *great* Condition of our Salvation? These are such *mighty* Arguments, as one would think, it were impossible for Men firmly to *believe*, and yet not be *persuaded* by them. Thus God in his Mercy and Goodness to us hath furnished the *Revelation* of his *Son* with such *prevalent* Motives, that our believing in him almost necessarily draws after it the Performance of the *whole* condition of our Salvation; for upon our believing in *Jesus*, and considering his Proposals, we are compassed round about with so many *puissant* Reasons to submit our selves to his Laws, as (one would think) all the Temptations of the *Devil* and the *World* are not able to resist. So *careful* hath God been to secure us from Sin and Misery, that knowing the Force of our *natural* Reason to be so *weak* to secure us, he hath sent us down these *fresh* Auxiliaries from *Heaven*, by whose Assistance, if we do but trust to and imploy them, we may easily repulse *all* the Temptations

tations of Sin, and fight our Way through *all* the Difficulties of our Duty. *For this is the Victory*, saith the Apostle, *by which we overcome the World, even our Faith*, 1 John v. 4. which Words are urged by him as an Instance of the Easiness and Gentleness of our Obedience to the Gospel, which is the Condition of our Salvation ; for v. 3. saith he, *this is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments, and his Commandments are not grievous*. Well, but how doth this appear? Why saith he, *for every one that is born of God overcometh the World, and this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith*. For who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, v. 5. So that he proves the easiness of the Gospel Commands by this Argument, that the keeping them depends upon that Faith by which we believe Jesus to be the Son of God. By this means therefore God hath mercifully rendred the Condition of our Salvation *easy* to us by rendring the Performance of it so necessarily consequent to our believing in Jesus ; in which how good he hath been to us will evidently appear, if we consider.

4thly, That to beget this Belief in us he hath given us the most plain and convincing Evidence; viz. the Evidence of those miraculous

raculous Works wherewith he accompanied the Ministry of our *Saviour* and his *Apostles*, and sealed and confirmed it to the World ; which of all Kinds of Evidence is the most apt to convince, and persuade the World of the Truth of any *divine* Revelation ; for this Kind of Evidence appeals to Mens Senses, and is such an Argument as they may see and touch and handle ; and Men are generally apt to give more Credit to their own Senses than to the *clearest* Inferences and Deductions of Reason. And indeed the Generality of Men are hardly capable of any other Notices of Things but what are immediatly impressed upon them by the Objects of their Sense ; for they have not Skill enough to compare *simple* Terms so exactly with one another as to compound them into true Propositions, and then to infer from every such Proposition its natural Consequents and Deductions. These are Things that require a great deal more Art and Leisure, than Mens Educations and Affairs will ordinarily afford them. But *Miracles* are Things that are obvious to Mens Senses, and from them to infer a *divine* Commission in the Person that works them, is not only possible but very easie to the most vulgar Understanding. For *Miracles* being the visible Effects of a *divine* Power cannot be supposed

to be wrought by any but Persons that are *divinely* commissioned, and he that shews me an *immediate* Effect of God's Power gives me *that* in Token that he came from God. So that the Argument of *Miracles*, you see, is the most *plain* and *intelligible* of all others; and as it is so, it is the most *powerful* to convince and persuade Men. For whereas had our *Saviour* proved his Doctrins, in a Way of *rational* Discourse and Inference, he must have proved them all *singly* and *apart* by *distinct* and *different* Arguments, which would have been so *tedious* that the *Vulgar* would never have Leisure enough to attend them, nor yet Capacity enough to retain them; but by this Argument of *Miracles* he proved them all at once, because his *Miracles* were a Token that the God of Truth did approve his Doctrin; and it cannot be supposed that the God of Truth would have so visibly approved of his Doctrin in the *Gross*, had any Part or Proposition of it been *false* and *erroneous*. Thus God out of his *infinite* Goodness hath not only revealed his *everlasting* Gospel to us, but hath also taken the most *effectual* Course to convince and persuade us of the Truth of it. He hath set his own *Almighty* Power at Work to *still* the Seas, and *raise* the *Dead*, to *cure* the *Blind* and
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Lame and Diseased, to *change and vary* the Course and Order of his Creation, and all this for no *other* Purpose but to persuade Mankind of the Truth of those *glad Tidings* which he revealed from *Heaven* to them by his own *Son*. And as he hath given us the *best* Evidences to convince us of the Truth of his *Gospel*, so he hath taken the most *effectual* Course, to continue and perpetuate it to the World. For *first*, he raised up *sundry Eye-witnesses* who conversed with our *Saviour*, and beheld his *Miracles*, and after they had seen him *risen from the Dead*, and *ascended up into Heaven*, did openly publish and testify them to the World, and finally confirmed and ratified their Testimony by laying down their Lives for it; which was as *high* a Confirmation as could possibly have been given of the Truth of it. But lest after all, the World should suspect them, God also furnished them with the Gift of *Miracles*, and continued that Gift as an *Heirloom* to their Successors for *Three Hundred Years* together; that so as the Testimony of the *first Eye-witnesses* was confirmed not only by their *Martyrdoms*, but by their *Miracles* also; so it might still be handed down from them through the *successive* Generations in the same *infallible* manner till it was spread over all the World, and needed no

farther *Martyrdoms*, or *Miracles* to confirm it. O *blessed God*! What care hast thou taken, *first* to provide, and *then* to secure the Evidences of our *holy Religion*, that all Generations might have *sufficient* Motives of Credibility; and that Mankind might still have *abundant* Reason to believe in thy *Son* to the End of the World, when they shall see him come down from *Heaven* to Judgment? How *easie* therefore hath *God* rendred the Condition of our Salvation to us, when he hath not only rendred the Performance of it so necessarily *consequent* to our *believing in Jesus*, but also to beget this *Belief*, in us hath given us such *abundant* Evidence? How can we sufficiently *admire* and *adore* his Goodness that hath been so infinitely *solicitous* to secure our Happiness, and hath so contrived Things that we cannot heartily believe his *Gospel* and not be persuaded by it to comply with the Terms of our Salvation; nor yet impartially consider the Evidence of his *Gospel*, and not heartily believe it? And yet as if all this were not enough,

5thly, And lastly, to render this Belief *operative* and *effectual*, he hath engaged himself to *assist*, *actuate*, and *enliven* it by his own *immediate* Concurrence. Provided we use our own *honest* Endeavour he hath assured

affured us *again and again* that he will give his Holy Spirit to every one that asks; that he will work in us to will and to do, if we will but take care to work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling; and that to him that hath, i. e. makes an honest Improvement of that Strength that he hath, it shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. So that though one would have thought he had done sufficiently for us before in giving us such abundant Evidence to beget in us an hearty Belief of his Gospel, and such prevalent Motives to persuade us to submit to it, and comply with his gracious Proposals; yet such was his Goodness to us, such his importunate Care of our Welfare, that he could not stop here, nor think that yet he had done enough for us till by an irrepealable Promise he had obliged himself to us to co-operate with us, and by the immediate Influences of his Grace to bless and succeed our honest Endeavours. So that we can no sooner attempt our own Restauration, no sooner set our selves in the way to our Happiness, but the good God is immediately present with us, exciting our Faith, fixing our Consideration, animating and encouraging our poor Endeavours, and supplying us with all manner of Grace and Assistance that our State and Necessities require. Nay, and many and many a Time, while

we are Sleeping on in our *wretched sinful* Security, he comes in Pity to visit us, and *ever* and anon suggests *good* Thoughts to our Minds to rouse and awake us out of those *fatal* Slumbers, to enliven our *Faith*, and call up our *Consideration*; nay, and oftentimes he doth so *urge*, and *second*, and *repeat* those Thoughts to us, that by being so haunted with their Importunities, we are forced to fix our Minds on them whether we will or no. And though we like *ungrateful* Wretches do many times stifle his *good* Motions, and turn a *deaf* Ear to his Calls and *gracious* Invitations to Happiness; yet doth he not presently give over, but whilst we are running away from him, we hear a Voice behind us calling after us to return; and though we *still* run on, yet *still* he follows us with his Importunities through the *whole* Course of our *sinful* Life, till either he hath brought us *back*, or we have run our selves *past* all Hope of Recovery. These are Things, I dare say, that every Man in the World, *one* Time or *other*, hath had *sensible* Experience of. And is not this a *strange* Condescension of Goodness to see the God of *Heaven* and *Earth* thus courting and wooing a Company of *impotent* Rebels to lay down their Arms, and accept his Grace and his *everlasting* Preferments? And
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though they reject his Motions, and stop their Ears to those *still* Whispers of his that secretly *invade* their Souls; yet to consider how he still solicits and importunes them, as if he would take no Denyal, and were resolved not to let them alone till he had persuaded them to be happy; O *good* God! what *prodigious* Stories of Love are these? What *strange amazing* Condescensions to thy *wretched undeserving* Creatures? And now after all this what can the Lord our God do more for us that is *consistent* either with his own Wisdom, or with the Freedom of our Natures? He hath done all that can be done to draw us to *Heaven*, and if that will not do, it is by no Means fit that he should drag us thither; since it would be a most *mean unreasonable* Condescension in him to force us to be *happy* when we are unwilling to accept it, and to prostitute the Reward of *Piety and Virtue* to those that scorn, and reject it.

And now to conclude this Argument; from hence I infer how monstrously *ungrateful* those Persons are, who complain of the Difficulty and Burthensomeness of this *gentle and merciful* Condition of our Salvation: When in so many Instances it is apparent how *merciful* God hath been in imposing such a Condition upon us. In the Name

of God what would you have Sirs, would you have *Heaven* drop into your Mouths, while you lie still and do nothing? Or can you think it is fit that so *vast* a Reward should be prostituted to the *lazy* Wishes of such *Drones* and *Sluggards*, as do not think it worth the labouring for? That those *golden* Fruits should hang down from *Heaven* to us on an *overladen* Bow, to be cropt by every *idle* *Wanton* Hand, that will stretch forth it self to take and eat it? Surely no *reasonable* Creature can be so *senseless*, as to entertain such a *wild* and *fond* Conceit. Well then, would you have God admit of *such* a Condition of Salvation, as includes in it a Licence to enjoy your Lusts, and gives you Liberty to be as *wicked* as you please? But alas! if God should be so *fond* of your Salvation as to offer Violence to his own Nature and Government, by yielding to your Sins, and granting you a *free* Dispensation to enjoy them; yet it is impossible in the Nature of the Thing; because your Salvation will not consist with it. For to be saved from Misery whilst we are let alone to enjoy our Sins is a Contradiction, and so not the Object of any Power, no not of Omnipotence it self. For Sin it self is the *greatest* Misery that *human* Nature is *liable* to; 'tis this that *convulses* all its Faculties, that racks

racks and *stretches* them out of Joint, and *disports* them into an *unnatural* Figure and Position; 'tis this that makes us *our own Reverse*, *transposes* our *Head* with our *Feet*, and makes our *Reason* truckle to our *Sense*; our *intellectual* Faculties that were made to govern, to serve those *brutish* Passions and Appetites which Nature designed to be their *Vassals*; which is such a *barbarous* Violence to the very Frame and Constitution of our Nature, as will, whensoever we recover out of our *lethargick* Stupidity, be as sensibly *dolorous* to our Souls, as *Racks*, or *Wheels*, or *Catasta's* to our Bodies. So that for God to save us from Misery whilst he suffers us to continue in our Sins, is altogether as *impossible* as it is to save us from *burning*, whilst he suffers us to continue *weltring* in the Flames of Fire; and to make us *well* in Sickness, or *easie* in Diseases are not more *repugnant* to the Nature of Things, than 'tis to make us *happy* in our Sins; and yet this is the only Matter we complain of, that God will not allow us a *free* Dispensation to be *wicked* in that which is the Condition of our *Salvation*. O *blessed* God! How is it *possible* thou shouldst ever please such *froward*, *peevish*, and *ungrateful* Creatures, who will never be satisfied unless thou performest *Impossibilities*, and makest *Contradictions*

to be true for their sakes? For shame therefore let us no longer complain, that the Condition of our Salvation is *too hard and rigorous*; but since God hath been pleased to condescend so low to us, as to indulge us whatsoever is *consistent* with our Salvation, let us *admire* and *adore* his Goodness, and with our Souls *inflamed* with Love and Gratitude to him, *cheerfully* undertake what he hath so mercifully enjoyed us.

JOHN

JOHN III. 16.

----- *That whosoever believeth in him,
should not perish, but have everlasting
Life.*

I Am now upon the latter Part of this Text, *that whosoever believeth in him, &c.* In which there are two great Instances of God's Goodness to us: *First*, his imposing upon us such a *gentle and merciful Condition*, *that whosoever believeth in him*: *Secondly*, his proposing to us so *vast a Reward* upon the Performance of it; *should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* The first of these I have handled already, and now I proceed to the second, *viz.* the *vast Reward* he hath proposed to us upon the Performance of this *merciful Condition*. And in this you have

First, the *negative Part* of it, *that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish.*

Secondly, the *positive One*, *but have everlasting Life.*

I. I begin with the first of these, *that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish.*

In prosecution of which Argument I shall do these three Things; 1. Shew

1. Shew you what is meant by *perishing* here.

2. By what *Right* we were concerned in, and obliged to it.

3. What *unspeakable* Goodness God hath discovered to us in freeing and absolving us from *this* Obligation.

1. What is meant by *perishing* here, or not perishing? That *whosoever believeth in him, should not perish*, that is, that whosoever believes in him might be pardoned, or absolved from the obligation of *perishing for ever*, to which his Sins have rendred him justly *liable*. For that by this Phrase *μη ἀπολυσθαι*, *he should not perish*, or be destroyed, is not meant the *Annihilation* or Destruction of our Beings, as the *Socinians* and some others imagin, is evident by its being opposed to *everlasting Life*, which, as I shall shew you hereafter, doth not denote our *mere* Continuance in Life and Being *for ever*, but our Continuance in a most *blissful* and *happy* Life *for ever*; and consequently the Destruction that is *here* opposed to it must not denote our *eternal* Discontinuance to *be* and live, but our living most *wretchedly* and *miserably* *for ever*. And indeed wheresoever *Death*, or *Destruction* is spoken of in Opposition to *eternal Life*, this is apparently the Sense of it. So Rom. vi. 23. *The wages of Sin is death*, but

but the Gift of God is eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Now that by Death here is understood a State of *endless* Misery and Suffering, in Opposition to that State of *endless* Happiness which *eternal* Life implies, is evident ; because he cannot mean the *first* Death, which consists in the Separation of the Soul from the Body ; for though *this* were originally the *Wages* of Sin, yet in it self it is not so now, but the *necessary* Condition of our Nature ; for whether we Sin or no, we must undergo it, being obliged to it by the *irreversible* Decree of our Maker. But the *Death* here spoken of is the Effect of our own *personal* Sin, without which we are not liable to it, as you may plainly see v. 21. *What fruit had ye then in those things,* (i.e. those Sins) *whereof ye are now ashamed ? For the end of those things, or Sins, is Death.* Wherefore since it cannot be meant of the *first*, it must be meant of the *second* Death, which St. John makes mention of Rev. 2. 11. *He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second Death.* And what that is, the same Author tells you Rev. 20. 14. *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire : This is the second Death ;* that is, this Lake of Fire, or the Torments and Miseries which condemned Sinners endure in it, is the *second* Death ;

Death; for so he explains himself v. 10. *And the Devil that deceived them, was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where the Beast and the false Prophet are, and shall be tormented Day and Night for ever and ever.* And this is that Death which is opposed to the immortal Rewards of the Blessed, as you may see Rev. 21. 7, 8. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things, that is, all those immortal Recompences which God has prepared for virtuous Souls. But the fearful and unbelieving, &c. shall have their part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone: Which is the second Death.*

And as Death, when opposed to eternal Life, denotes a State of endless and continued Misery, so doth Destruction also. So Mat. 7. 13, 14. *Broad is the way that leadeth to Destruction. Narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life:* By the later of which it is granted on all hands he means Life eternal; and that by Destruction he means a State of endless Misery, is evident from Matth. 10. 28. *but fear him which is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell;* which according to St. John's Exposition, Rev. 20. 10. is to torment them *Day and Night for ever and ever.* And this destroying in Hell our Saviour elsewhere expresses by casting into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where
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their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; which is as plain a Description of an endless State of Misery as Words can express; for how is it possible that *Annihilation* should signify either a Fire that never goes out, or a Worm that never dies: So also, *2 Thess. 1. 9. who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord*, meaning the wicked Persecuters at Christ's coming to Judgment. Now that by that *everlasting Destruction* he means a State of *endless Suffering and Torment* is evident, if we consider the Description which our Saviour gives of that Punishment to which the Wicked shall be sentenced at the last Day; *Go ye cursed, saith he, into everlasting Fire, Matth. 25. 41.* And lest we should fancy that 'tis the Fire only that is eternal, but not the Punishment, v. 46. of that Chap. *And these, saith he, shall go away into everlasting Punishment: but the Righteous into Life eternal.* And that they do actually exist in *this Fire*, and continue in the Torment of it is evident by those Actions that are therein attributed to them, such as *weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth, Matth. 13. 42, 50*; which Actions are plain Indications not only of their subsisting in this *everlasting Fire*, but of the *extream Horror and Anguish* they shall there-

therein endure. And as this Fire is said to be everlasting, so the Everlastingness of it is described so as to exclude all Limits, and prescind from all Determinations. For Fire must be extinguished e're it can cease to burn, and therefore that which cannot be extinguished can never end; but such is that Fire whereunto the Wicked are condemned at the Day of Judgement; so *Matth. 3. 12. whose fan is in his hand; -- but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable Fire.* And that the Sufferers shall be no more extinguished than the Fire that burns them, is evident from *Rev. 14. 11. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. And they have no rest day nor night.* And how can the smoke of this Fire be said to be the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever, unless they exist in it for ever and ever; especially considering what follows immediately after, *they have no rest day nor night?* Which Expression is the same with that by which the same Author signifies the eternal Happiness of good Men; so *Rev. 4. 8. They rest not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy;* and *Rev. 7. 15. The are before the Throne of God, and serve him day and night in his Temple.* And if Day and Night here, when applied to the State of Heaven, denotes the continued blisful Employment of
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happy Souls there *forever*; then for the same Reason, when 'tis applied to the State of *Hell*, it must denote the *continued* Miseries of the *Damned* there *forever*. Well then, if the Fire of *Hell* be *everlasting*, yea if it be so absolutely *everlasting* as that it is *unquenchable*; and if those that are cast into it shall be tormented *for ever and ever*, all which the *Scripture* doth directly teach; then it necessarily follows, that the *Wicked* must subsist in their Miseries *for ever*, and be *co-eternal* with the Flames that torment them. The Reason therefore why that *future* Punishment to which our Sins do consign and oblige us, is called by the Name of *Destruction*, *Perdition*, and *Death*, is not because it puts a *final* Period either to our Being or Subsistence, as some fondly Dream; but because it *forever* separates and disjoyns us from *God*, who is the *better* and the *nobler* Life of Man, and from all those *sweet* Perceptions of Comfort and Pleasure, of which Life is the Principle. And there is no *Language*, *Phrases*, or *Expressions* can be supposed to *patronize* a *contrary* Opinion, since the same *Scriptures* which say that the *Wicked* shall be *destroyed*, and *perish*, and *die*, say also that they shall be tormented with *never-dying* Pains, as they plainly and frequently do. This I have the longer in-

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sisted upon; because it is a very *dangerous* Thing for Men to be deceived in this Matter, not to know the worst of the Consequents of their own Follies, but to expect an *easier* and a *shorter* Hell than ever they are like to find. And so I have done with the *first* Thing proposed, *viz.* what is here meant by *perishing*, and proved to you at large that hereby is meant living miserably *forever*.

2dly. I proceed now to the *next* Thing proposed, *viz.* how we came to be concerned in, and obliged to this *dreadful* Penalty? To which I answer, that originally we were hereunto obliged by the Law of our Nature; for Man being naturally an *immortal* Creature, must necessarily be *forever* liable to the *natural* Effects of his own Actions; and therefore since Misery is the *natural* Effect of *sinful* Actions, if we continue Sinners *forever*, we must necessarily continue *miserable forever*; And if God should have inflicted no *other* Miseries upon *wicked* Souls when they are separated from their Bodies than what are necessarily consequent to their own Wickedness, these would be an *Hell* of *insufferable* Torment to them. So that from the very *Immortality* of our Natures we are *capable* of *everlasting* Perseverance in Sin, and from our *everlasting*
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Perseverance in Sin we are fatally *damned* to *everlasting* Misery. And as by the Law of our Natures we are thus bound over to *eternal* Punishment, so are we also by the *positive* Sentence and Determination of God, who hath not only obliged us to obey him under the Penalty of enduring *forever* the Miseries that are naturally *appendent* to our Sins, but hath added thereunto all those *positive* Torments which the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, and the Horrors of *outer* Darkness do imply: For so in his *Word* he hath plainly declared to us that if after he hath tryed us to the utmost, we will not be reclaimed, but are so *desperate* as to proceed in our Wickedness *mangre* all the Arts and Methods he can use to reduce us, he will at last shut us up in a State of *endless* and *irreversible* Torment. And this is no more than what he might very justly and rightfully do; for he being the *Supream* Lawgiver of the World, hath an *immutable* Right to enforce his Laws with such Penalties as are *sufficient* to secure them from being violated by his Subjects; for otherwise he would be *defective* in his Power of *Legislation*; for how could he have *sufficient* Power to make Laws, if he had not Right to enforce them with *sufficient* Penalties? But we that are his Subjects being so *apt* to offend,

and so extreamly *liable* to Temptations thereunto, no *less* Penalty could be sufficient to secure our Obedience than that which is *eternal*; for which Reason he hath enforced his Laws with the Threatning of it. And if *God* thought no *less* than the Threatning of *eternal* Punishment necessary to deter Men from their Sins, what *less* than the Execution of that Threat can be sufficient to render them Examples of his Severity against it? For Threats without Execution are but *mere* Scare-crows; and it is highly *unreasonable* for us to be afraid of any Threat, which we have Reason to conclude shall never be executed upon us. Wherefore, since the *Sovereign* Lord and Governor of the World hath in himself an unalienable Right to enforce his own Laws by what Penalties he pleases, and since to enforce them in the *highest* Degree he hath established them under the Penalty of *eternal* Torment; it is no *less* *reasonable* for him to execute this Penalty than it was to threaten and denounce it; otherwise his Threats will be altogether *insignificant*. For the End of *legal* Threats is to terrify the Subject from Disobedience; but since we are assured that *God* will do nothing but what is *just* and *reasonable*, why should we be terrified at any Threats of his, which he cannot as reasonably

sonably inflict as denounce against us? Nor is it any Blemish to the *divine* Goodness, that he hath threatned such an *heavy* Punishment against those that transgress his Laws; for since he hath injoynd us nothing but what is for our *good*, and tends to our Happiness; and since the End of his Threats is to oblige us to observe his Injunctions; it hence necessarily follows, that the more *terrible* his Threatnings are, the more he obliges us by them to pursue *our own* Happiness. And certainly for God to lay his Creatures under the *strongest* Obligations to be *happy*, is so far from being a Blemish to his Goodness that it is a most *glorious* Expression of it; and if we will be so obstinate as to incur that *direful* Penalty under which he hath obliged us to be *happy*, it is but *just* and *reasonable* that he should inflict it upon us, and make us feel *forever* the *rueful* Effects of *our own* Folly and Madness. Wherefore since we had all broken his Laws, and wilfully rendered our selves *guilty* before him, we thereby became most justly *obnoxious* to this most *dreadful* Penalty of *perishing forever*. And thus you see by what Right we were concerned in, and obliged to *this* Penalty.

3dly, I now proceed to the *third*, and Last Thing propos'd, which is to shew you the *unspeakable* Goodness that God hath express'd to us in that Way and Method which he hath prescribed to release us from this Obligation of *perishing forever*. For the Way and Method prescribed by him is *this*, to send his own most *blessed Son* to suffer in our Stead, that so we repenting of our Sins and forsaking them, might upon the Account of his Sufferings be released from this Obligation to *eternal Punishment*. And hence *Christ* is said to *put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself*, Heb. ix. 26. that is, to make Expiation for it, even as the *Jewish High Priest* did by those Sacrifices which he offered. And accordingly, Col. i. 14. it is said, that *in him we have Redemption through his Blood, even the forgiveness of Sins*; that is, upon Condition we heartily and sincerely repent of them. For, *if we walk in the light, saith the Apostle, as he is in the light*; that is, if we forsake our Sins, and become *pure as he is pure, and holy as he is holy*; we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of *Jesus Christ* cleanseth us from all Sin. This therefore being the Way and Method which God hath prescribed to release us from the Obligation to *eternal Punishment*, what an *unspeakable* Love

Love and Goodness he hath herein expressed to us will evidently appear by the Consideration of these *four* Things.

1. His *admitting* of *another* to suffer in our Stead.
2. His *exacting* such a Suffering for the Price of our Pardon, as was most *effectual* to secure us from sinning again.
3. His *consenting* that his own *Son* should submit to *this* Suffering.
4. His *choosing* to grant Pardon to us upon his Suffering as a *Sacrifice* for our Sins.

1. One very *great* Instance of God's Love and Goodness to us in this Method of Pardon is his admitting of *another* to suffer in our Stead. Had he been pleased, he might have exacted the Punishment of the Criminals, and made the Offenders smart *forever* in their own Persons; yea, and this he might have justly done notwithstanding the *best* Reason they could render him to the contrary. For the *best* Reason a Sinner can render why he should not be punished, is his *heartly* Repentance; for next to being perfectly *innocent*, the *best* Thing we can do, is to reform when we have done amiss; but yet this doth not at all diminish the Guilt and Demerit of our *past* Transgressions. For Repentance doth not at all alter the

Nature of the Act, nor make it *less* evil, nor *less* deserving of Punishment ; and therefore since the Act it self obliges us to Punishment, our Repentance of it doth no way *cancel* the Obligation. 'Tis true, God might if he had pleased, have pardoned us upon our Repentance without any *other* Reason or Motive ; but it is certain, that Repentance is not a *sufficient* Reason to move him to declare a Promise of Pardon to a *sinful* World, it being no way consistent with the Safety either of *divine* or *humane* Governments, so far to encourage Offenders as to indemnify them universally by a *publick* and *standing* Declaration merely upon their *future* Repentance and Amendment ; because by such a Declaration they must let *loose* the Reigns to all manner of Licentiousness. For if Subjects are now so *prone* to transgress when they have so much Reason to expect a *severe* Punishment for it, how much more *prone* would they be, were their Governours so *easy* as to assure them beforehand that the Punishment due to their Crimes should be immediately remitted upon their *unfeigned* Repentance ? Wherefore, since our Repentance is no *sufficient* Reason to oblige God to pardon us, and much less to move him to make a Promise of Pardon to us ; and since this is the *best* Reason

Reason that we can offer in our Behalf, to move him thereunto; it hence necessarily follows, that if he had pleased, when once we had broken his Laws, he might have justly executed upon us that *eternal* Punishment which he had threatned, notwithstanding all we could have done to move him to the contrary. But such is his *inexpressible* Goodness towards us, that to put himself into a Capacity of pardoning *penitent* Sinners with Safety to his Government, and of making a *publick* Grant of Pardon and Indemnity to them, thereby to encourage them to repent, he hath graciously admitted *another* Person to suffer in our Stead; that so neither their Persons might be ruined, nor yet their Sins be unpunished, and that he might sufficiently express to them his Severity against their Sins without exposing them to the *eternal* Smart of it. For though the Suffering of *this* Person, as I shall shew you by and by, was a *sufficient* Reason to move *God* to forgive us upon our *unfeigned* Repentance, yet it was no such Reason as did necessarily oblige him thereunto; for if he had pleased he might have righteously exacted our Punishment at *our own* Hands, and made us *forever* rue for *our own* Folly and Madnes; but such was his Goodness towards us, that for the

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Sufferings of the *Innocent* he hath mercifully acquitted the Punishment due to Offenders; and so scourged our Sins upon the Back of our *Saviour*; for though he suffered for us, yet we suffered not in *him*, our Persons were not at all damnified by those *bitter* Agonies which he endured for our Sins; so that to a wonder of Mercy they have been so severely punished as 'tis fit they should, and yet we who were the Authors of them never felt the Smart. *Blessed God!* How *merciful* hast thou been to thy Creatures, that hast thus found out a Way to distinguish the Sin from the Sinner, and so to punish the one, as to let the *other* escape? For by his *gracious* Admission, *Christ* hath once suffered for Sins, *the just for the unjust*, that he might bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii 18.

2ly, Another Instance of God's Love and Goodness to us in this Method of Pardon, is his exacting such a Suffering for the Price of our Pardon as is most *effectual* to secure us from sinning again, which is a *plain* Instance of the *mighty* Care he hath taken to pardon us in such a way as might be most for our *future* Security. For it would have been no way *proper* for the *wise* Governour of the World to grant a *general* Pardon to Offenders without some *sufficient* Reason moving him thereunto. Now that Repen-

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tance which is the *best* Reason we can offer him is not *sufficient*, I have already shewed you, because it is not *sufficient* to secure his Government, in the *good* Management whereof the Welfare of all his Subjects is involved. For his Laws requiring nothing but what is for our *good*, 'tis truly our Interest to be kept under a *strict* Obedience to them; so that should he pardon us upon any Reason that is not *sufficient* to secure his Government and our Obedience, it would be a *publick* Nuisance and Damage to Mankind; and consequently the *greater* the Reason is that moves him to pardon us what is *past*, and the *more* it enforces our Obedience for the *future*, the *greater* is the Goodness which he expresses in pardoning us, and the *more* it conduces to our Welfare and Happiness. But now upon what *higher* Motive could he have made a Grant of Pardon to us than upon the most *meritorious* Sufferings of his own Son for us? For since nothing that we could do was a *sufficient* Reason to move him to promise to us the Forgiveness of our Sins, it was requisite that something more should be done for us by some *other* Person, and the *greatest* Thing that any *other* Person could do for us to move God to forgive us, was to suffer in our Stead; because hereby not only a *publick*

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Acknowledgement is made of what we have deserved for our Sins, but something of the Punishment *due* to them is paid as a *publick* Satisfaction to the Law. So that if God pardons us upon such a Reason, he doth by the same Act express his most *tender* Mercy to us, and his *implacable* Severity against our Sins; for by pardoning us upon the Sufferings of *another* in our Stead, he expresses his *heartly* Good-Will to us, and openly signifies how *unwilling* he is to ruin us. But then by exacting the Sufferings of *another* in our Stead, before he will be induced to grant a Pardon to us, he manifests to us how implacably he *hates* our Sins, and how inexorably *severe* he is against them. But then if he pardon us upon *this* Reason of another's suffering in our Stead, then the *greater* and more *excellent* the Person is that suffers for us, the *greater* Reason he hath to forgive us upon it. For *such* as the Person is that suffers, *such* is the Moment and Value of his Suffering; because the End of all such *vicarious* Punishments being only this, to give such an Example of the Severity of Governours against Offenders, as may be *sufficient* to vindicate the Honour of the Law, and secure the Obedience of the Subject; the Value of his Suffering, who thus suffers for us must consist in this, that it is a *more*
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or *less* exemplary Signification of the Severity of the Lawgiver against our Sins for which he suffers; and doubtless it would be a *higher* Signification of God's Severity against our Sins not to pardon us but upon the Sufferings of an *innocent* Angel, than not to pardon us but upon the Sufferings of an *innocent* Man. What a most *exemplary* Signification then is this of his Severity against our Sins, that he would not pardon us but upon the Sufferings of his own most *innocent* Son; who being the *greatest* Person in all the Creation, did by his suffering in our Stead exhibit the *greatest* Instance of God's Severity against our Sins that could possibly have been given by any Person whatsoever that was *capable* of suffering for us? So that his suffering in our Stead was apparently the *best* and *highest* Reason that could possibly have been given to move *God* to pardon us, and consequently his pardoning us in *such* a Way and upon *such* a Reason is a most *glorious* Instance of his Goodness towards us, and of that *tender* Regard he hath of our Welfare. For now in the very Method of his pardoning us what is *past*, he hath taken a most *effectual* Course to secure our Obedience for the *future*, that very Reason that moved him to pardon us being the *greatest* Reason that can be urged to terrify us from
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sinning again. For what Consideration is there that can fill us with *greater* Horror against our Sins than this, that the Guilt of them is so *great* and *heinous* that the most *merciful* Father would never have forgiven them, had not his own most *glorious* Son suffered for them in our Stead? And indeed had not *God* thus provided for the securing of our Obedience in the very Method of his Pardon, his Grace in pardoning us would have been very *insignificant*; for our Welfare and Happiness being all bound up in our Obedience, our Pardon without this could not have secured us from being *miserable*. So that if in the Method of his Pardon he had not so *manifested* his Severity against our Sins as to discourage us sufficiently from sinning again, his very Mercy and Compassion would have proved *destructive* to us; because it would have encouraged us to Sin on, and thereby to make our selves *miserable*. For Sin and Misery are so inseparably *interwoven*, that all the Pardon *God* can give us while we continue in our Sins is not *sufficient* to prevent our being *miserable*; but such hath been his Goodness towards us, such his Care to prevent our Sin and Misery, as that in the very Reason that moves him to pardon us, for what is *past*, he gives us a most terrible
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warning not to Sin again. For he that can behold such a *dreadful* Spectacle as the Son of God dying for Sin, and yet Sin on, is a *valiant* Sinner indeed, and may with the *same* Courage follow his Lusts into the Flames of *Hell*. So *careful* hath the good God been to plot and contrive for the Welfare of his Creatures, that he would not so much as pardon them when they had offended him, but in such a Way as was most for their Security and Good.

3dly, His consenting that his own Son should submit himself to this Suffering, is another *great* Instance of his Goodness towards us in this method of pardoning us. That he should not only admit of a Sacrifice to bear our Transgressions and suffer in our Stead, but that himself should provide *one* for us, and such a *one* too as his own most *dear* and *precious* Son, is such a Miracle of Love and Goodness as the whole Creation cannot parallel. For though Mankind had provoked him to that Height that none but a God of *infinite* Patience could have born it, yet such was his Unwillingness to inflict that *direful* Punishment upon them which he had justly threatned, and they had justly deserved, that notwithstanding all their Demerits he was still vehemently inclined to be *propitious* to them.

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But then how to save them, and at the same Time so to manifest his Severity against their Sins as was *needful* to preserve the Authority and Honour of his Laws that had threatned Destruction to them, was the *great* Difficulty ; for should he have wholly omitted the Punishment, he would have very much undervalued the Authority of his Laws in the Esteem of his Subjects, the main security of their Authority being the Punishment annexed to them ; but on the contrary should he have exacted the *utmost* of the Punishment, he must have destroyed the whole Race of Men, we being all Offenders in his Sight. In this Extremity therefore, that he might pardon such a World of Sinners with safety to his Government, it was highly *necessary* for him to exhibit to the World some *dreadful* Example of his Severity against them, such as might be *sufficient* to prevent Offenders from taking any Encouragement from his pardoning them to offend again. But to make a Sinner such a *great* Example of his Severity against the Sins of others was *impossible*, because his own Sins may deserve the *utmost* Severity that God can inflict upon him ; and therefore among our selves who were all Sinners there was no Person could be found fit to be made *such* an Example of his
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his Severity against the Sins of the whole World. And if an *innocent* Angel should have freely offered up himself to bear our Punishment, and Suffer in our Stead, his Suffering in our Room would not have so sufficiently expressed Gods Severity against the Sins of a whole World of Sinners, as was *convenient*; for what great Severity would it have been to have exacted the suffering of one *innocent* Angel, in lieu of that *eternal* Punishment that was due to a whole World of Men? Wherefore it being highly *convenient*, that the Dignity of the Person who suffered for us should be such as might render his Suffering in some Degree *proportionable* to the Punishment due to our Sins, that so his Suffering in our stead might be as *exemplary* to the World, as if we ourselves had suffered to the *utmost* of our Desert, and there being no Creature of that Dignity either in *Heaven* or *Earth*; in this Extremity, the *eternal Son* of God himself interposes, and freely offers to *unite* himself to our Natures, and therein to suffer in our Stead, upon Condition that on our *unfeigned* Repentance and Amendment a *free Charter* of Pardon might be granted for all our *past* Provocations. So that now an Expedient being proposed by which God might both pardon our Sins, and sufficiently *manifest*

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his Severity against them, to secure the Authority of his Laws, and deter us from sinning again; though he saw how *dear* an Expedient it would prove, that it would cost him the most *precious* Blood of his own Son; yet such was his *tender* Pity towards us, so *great* his Unwillingness to ruin us *forever*, that he freely complied with the Motion, and consented that his Son should be sacrificed for the Sins of the World. And hence it is said, that *he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, Rom. viii. 32. And the Reason why he delivered him *up*, as he tells us, v. 3. of the same Chapter, was to *condemn Sin in the Flesh*, that is, to pronounce in the Suffering of his own Son for it, what a *dreadful* Punishment it deserved, and how much his Soul was incensed against it, that would not pardon it without such a *mighty* Propitiation. How inexpressibly *gracious* therefore hath God been to us, that when for the securing the Authority of his Laws it was so *necessary* to condemn our Sins, rather than condemn them in our own *personal* Punishment, he should chuse to condemn them in the sufferings of his own Son? It was a *great* Instance of his Goodness towards us to admit of *another* to suffer for us, in our stead; but to admit of his own Son, who is the *Darling* of Heaven and the
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Delight of his *Soul*, and not only so, but freely to give and deliver him *up* for us, and amidst all the yearnings of his *fatherly* Bowels towards him, not to spare his *precious* Life when it was to be made the Price of our Redemption, is such a Miracle of Love as transcends all *Hyperboles*.

4ly and lastly, his choosing to grant Pardon to us upon the Sufferings of his *Son* as a *Sacrifice* for our Sins, is also another *great* Instance of his Goodness to us in this Way of pardoning us. For the End of granting Pardon to Sinners upon their Repentance being to encourage them to repent, it was highly *convenient* to grant it to them in *such* a Way and upon *such* Reason, as might most effectually assure them thereof. And considering what was the *general* Persuasion of Mankind in this Matter, there was no such *effectual* Way to secure them of Pardon upon their Repentance, as this of granting Pardon to them upon the Motive of a *Sacrifice* for their Sins. For however it came to pass I know not, but it was a Principle generally received by Men of all *Nations* and *Religions*, that to appease the *incensed* Divinity it was necessary; First, that some *Sacrifice* should be made to him for their Sins, and then that some *high* Favourite of his should intercede with him in their Be-;

half; upon which were founded those two great Rights of *Propitiatory Sacrifices*, and *worshiping of Demons*, which made up a great Part of all the *Heathenish Religions* in the World. For as for *Propitiatory Sacrifices*, they were generally used not only by the *barbarous*, but by the most *civiliz'd Heathens*; which Sacrifices they devoted unto God to be their *Proxies* in Punishment, to undergo the Punishment that was due to them for their own Sins. And hence is that of the *antient Poet*, *Cum sis ipse nocens, moritur cur Victima pro te?* -- When thou thyself art the Offender, for what Reason should the Victim die for thee? And *Porphyry* tells us that the *first Rise* of the *Sacrifice*

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of *Animals* was, *τινὰ καὶ ἄνθρωπον ὑπὲρ ψυχῆς ἀνθρώπου*, certain Occasions requiring that a Soul, should be offered up for a Soul, that is, the Life of a *Beast* for the Life of a *Man*; for it was the *constant Opinion* that the more worthy the Sacrifice which they offered, the more *effectual* it was to appease their *offended Divinities*. And hence in many Places, the *ordinary Sacrifice* of *Attonement* which they offered, was the *Lives of Men*; and though this indeed was most used in the most *barbarous Countries*, yet in Cases of great Danger and Extremity the *Greeks and Romans*, themselves did frequently *Sacrifice*

fice humane Lives to their Gods ; for so it
 is recorded of the *Romans*, that when their
 City was in great Danger of being taken
 by *Hanibal*, they sacrificed a Man to their
 Tutelar God: And *Servius* tells us of the *Maf-*
silians, that in Time of Pestilence one of the
 poorer sort was wont to offer himself to be
 sacrificed for the whole City; who being
 for a whole Year nourished with the purest
 Meat, wasthen led about the City adorned
 with sacred Vestments and Cathartick Herbs,
 the People following him making solemn
 Execrations that the Plague might be re-
 moved from the City and fall upon his
 Head; which done, they offered him up
 in a Sacrifice. And in other Places they
 offered up pure Virgins of the noblest Fa-
 milies, to propitiate their angry Gods; and
 elsewhere, as *Servius* tells us, they were
 wont to cast a Man into the Sea with this
 Imprecation, *πρεῖν ἡμῶν γένε*, that is, be
 thou our Purgament, or Redemption. So
 also it is said of the *Athenians*, that they
 maintained some of the most unprofitable
 and ignoble of their People, that so when any
 great Calamity befell the City, they might
 offer them up in Sacrifice to appease their
 Gods. And that Passage of *Cæsar* con-
 cerning the *Gallic Nation* is very observable,
 that in Cases of great Danger and Calami-

ty they either devoted themselves to the Altar, or else offered up some Man in their Stead ; quod pro vita hominis nisi hominis vita reddatur, non posse Deorum immortalium Numen placari arbitrantur ; that is, *thinking that the immortal God's would never be appeased unless they offered up to them the Life of a Man for the Life of a Man* : All which is an Evidence that they not only thought Sacrifices necessary to appease God, but that they also believed the *better* the Sacrifice was, the *more* effectually it did appease him. Nor did they think it less necessary that there should be some *Intercessor* between them and the *Supream* Divinity to Solicite their Cause, and render Sin *propitious* to their Desires. And hence it was the *general* Doctrin of their *Divines*, that 'twas *great* Prophaneness for any thing that was *earthly* and *sinful* immediately to approach that *Pure* and *Divine* Being ; but that the *Demons* were to be the *Mediators* and Agents between him, and *mortal* Men, Θεὸς ἀνθρώπῳ ἐμίγνεται, ἀλλὰ διὰ Δαιμονίων πᾶσα ἐστὶν ὁμιλία καὶ ἡ διαλεκτική Θεοῖς περὶ ἀνθρώπους, as *Plato in his Sympos.* expresses it ; that is, *God is not approached by Men, but all the Commerce, and Intercourse between him and us is performed by the Mediation of Demons.* So that howsoever they came by this Principle

ciple it is apparent that they generally believed both *Sacrifices* and a *Mediator* to be *necessary* Means to reconcile them to *God*, and that without these they could not satisfy themselves that *God* would be *propitious* to them, no not upon their Repentance and Reformation. Some *good* Hopes they might have, and it is apparent they had, from the Goodness and Benignity of the *Divine* Nature, that if they forsook their Sins *God* would not be *inexorable* to them, at least they could not tell but they might find Mercy; but yet they durst not absolutely trust to this without devoting some *other* to suffer in their Stead, and engaging some *other* to intercede in their Behalf. And therefore we see that when the *King* of *Nineveh* upon *Jonah's* Preaching obliged his People to Fasting and Repentance, the *utmost* Encouragement he could give them was only this; *Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not*, *Jonah* iii. 9. Wherefore to give us the *highest* Assurance of Pardon if we repent, *God* hath been so infinitely *good* to us as to choose that very Method of reconciling us to himself, which we had chalked out to him, and to meet with us in *our own* Way, thereby to give us a *fuller* Assurance of his most *gracious* and *merciful*

Intentions to us ; for how could he have better satisfied the Anxiousness and Jealousy of our *guilty* Minds, than in granting us our Pardon in that very Way, wherein we did so universally hope for and expect it? *Good God!* How *indulgent* hast thou been to thy *poor* Creatures, that wast not only so ready to pardon them upon their Repentance, but so *careful* to give them the most *effectual* Assurance of it ; that so thou might'st remove all discouragements out of the Way to our Amendment and Happiness? For doubtless the Reason why he took *this* Way of Pardoning us more than *another*, was not only because it was best in it self, and most for the Interest of his own Government ; but also because of all others it was the most *effectual* to satisfy our *guilty* Fears, and assure us of his *merciful* Intentions to receive us into Favour again upon our Repentance and Amendment. For when Mankind were so unanimously *agreed* in this Belief, that without a *Sacrifice* and a *Mediator* he would not be appeased, how could he more effectually have convinced our Mistrust of his Mercy, than by sending his own *Son* to be our *Sacrifice* and *Mediator* ; to die for our Sins upon *Earth*, and intercede for our Pardon in *Heaven*? So that if now we will heartily repent of our Sins

Sins and forsake them, we have all the security of Mercy that we can desire ; our God being attoned by the noblest Sacrifice that ever was, and interceded with, on our Behalf by the most powerful and prevailing Mediator. Having therefore such an High Priest over the House of God, we may safely draw near with a true Heart, in full assurance of Faith, as the Apostle expresses it Heb. x. 21, 22. Thus you see how good and gracious God hath been to us in the Way and Method which he hath prescribed of pardoning our Sins, and releasing us from the obligation of Punishment for ever; which is so wise and good, and every way God-like, that I think, had I no other Reason to believe the Christian Religion, but only this wondrous Contrivance of pardoning Sinners revealed in the Gospel, this would have been enough to persuade me that none but a God could be the Author and Contriver of it. And now I shall conclude this Argument with a few Inferences.

1. From hence I infer what a very great Evil Sin is, seeing it is such an Evil as binds us over to perish for ever, and such as nothing can make Expiation for, but only the precious Blood of the Son of God; such, as our Saviour must die for, or our Souls must have

have suffered for, to all *Eternity*. How different therefore are our Thoughts from God's! We think it a Matter of *Sport* and *Laughter*, a Thing to *Play*, and make *Merry* with; but *God*, who knows the *inmost* Nature of things, looks upon it as a Thing of such a *black* and *horrid* Nature, as that nothing but the Blood of our *Souls*, or the Blood of his *Son* can make Expiation for. O *blessed God*! Had we but such Thoughts of our *Sins* as thou hast, how should we *start* and *tremble* at the Sight of them, and with what Horror and Amazement should we reflect upon them? Surely if all the *Devils* in *Hell* should stand round about us in the most *gastly* Shapes and Apparitions, it would not put us into half that Agony of Fear, as would the Sense and Remembrance of *our own* Guilts and Follies. For had we but a Window into *Hell* to look through and see what *unsufferable* Torments the *damned Ghosts* undergo there for those *Sins* we make so light of; how they *burn* and *roar* in those Flames of Lust, about which we like *silly* Flies do *sport* and *dally*; or had we but the *Cross* always standing before our Eyes with the *Son of God* hanging on it for those *Sins* that are our Recreation, *sighing* and *groaning* out his *innocent* Soul in Torment and Agonies to ex-
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piate those Faults which we commit with so much Greediness and Pleasure; surely either of these *sad* Spectacles would be *sufficient* to cool our Courage, and to make us affraid of ever sinning more. Why then should not our Belief of these Things have the same Effect upon us, as the Sight and Sense of them must needs be supposed to have? O *my Soul*, why should I be so *mad* as to hug and embrace my Lusts any longer, when I believe the *Evil* of them to be so *great* as that the *merciful* Father would never have forgiven them, had not his own most *blessed Son* born their Punishment, and freely submitted himself to suffer for them in my Stead; yea, and which I verily believe he will never Pardon yet, unless I heartily repent of, and forsake them; but notwithstanding all that his *Son* hath suffered to make Expiation for them, will yet pursue and prosecute them with the most *direful* effects of an *endless* and *omnipotent* Vengeance?

2ly, Hence I infer the Certainty of our *perishing for ever*, if we do not repent of our Sins and forsake them. For if *God* would not have forgiven them upon our Repentance, unless an Expiation had been made for them by the Blood of his *Son*; how can we imagin that he will *now* forgive

give them whether we repent of them or no ? When all that could be obtained for us from our *offended* God by the *vocal* Blood and Wounds of his own *Son*, (whose Language was a thousand Times more *effectual* for us, than all the *Rhetorick* of *Angels* could have been) was only this, that if yet we would heartily repent and amend , we should certainly find Mercy and Favour at his Hands ; can we be so *assured* as to hope for any more ? Is it likely, that our *obstinate* Continuance in *wilful* Rebellion against him should be a more *prevalent* Advocate for us, than the most *eloquent* Blood of that *innocent* Lamb, which spoke *better* Things for us than the Blood of *Abel* ? Will he be more *indulgent* to our Sins than he was to the *obedient* Sufferings of his own *Son*, whose Blood cryed *Mercy, Mercy*, with a Voice more *moving* and *persuasive* than the *united* Prayers of a World of *sinful* Creatures could have done, though they had been washed in Floods of *penitent* Tears ? Let us not therefore be so fond as to presume, that when the *utmost* that God would grant us for his own *dear* Son's sake, was to receive us to Mercy upon our *unfeigned* Repentance ; he will now for *our own* sakes pardon us whether we repent or no. And since at the *powerful* Intreaties of the Blood
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of *Jesus* he hath indulged to us as much Mercy as was fit for him to grant, and much more than we could ever have hoped for, let us not be so *immodest* as to expect any farther, but fix *this* as an *eternal* Verity in *our own* Minds, that either our Sins, or our Souls must *perish*; and then if after all that he hath done for us we will continue *wicked*, there is no Remedy but we must be *miserable* for ever.

3dly, And lastly, Hence also I infer how *inexcusable* we are if we now *perish* in our Sins, now *God* hath done such *great* Things for us, and contrived such an *excellent* Way to pardon us. So that now there can be nothing wanting to the Accomplishment of our Pardon, but only *our own* Repentance and Reformation; for *God* and our *Saviour* have done all that is to be done on their Part; our *Saviour* hath suffered for us, and *God* hath accepted it as an Expiation for our Sins. And now the whole Matter sticks at us, and there is nothing wanting, but only our Repentance; and if we will not Repent, and thereby intitle our selves to that *merciful* Pardon which *God* and our *Saviour* have prepared for us, there is none can be blamed for our Ruin but our selves: For when *Inquisition* shall
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be made for the Blood of our Souls, the only Cause of our Ruin will be found to be this, that we were wilfully and obstinately *impenitent*. What then shall we be able to say for *our* selves, when we come to plead for *our* Lives at the *Tribunal* of *God*? Shall we plead that our Condition was *hopeless* and *desperate*, we being bound over for our *past* Sins to an *irrevocable* Damnation? Alas! With what Confidence can we plead this, when *God* had been so *merciful* as not to exact of *our own* Persons the Penalty which his Law had denounced against us; but graciously admitted *another* to suffer for us, and upon his suffering promised to forgive us if we would heartily repent? Or can we pretend that by this *gracious* Indulgence of his he encouraged us to Sin on, and gave us Reason to hope that he, who without our Repentance had remitted so *much* of the Severity of his Laws as to admit *another* to suffer in our Stead, might as easily be induced to remit *all* whether ever we repented or no? Why how could he have more effectually discouraged us from sinning on, when he would admit of no *less* Suffering, but what, considering the Greatness of the Person who underwent it, was as *dreadful* an Example of his Severity against

gainst Sin as if he had damned *for ever* a whole World of Sinners? Or will you urge that you thought it in vain to return, since by your *former* Sins you had *for ever* forfeited the Favour of God? For though there was *some* Hopes that he might be intreated to pardon, or remit your Punishment; yet 'twas in vain to hope that after so *many* Provocations he would ever be thoroughly reconciled again, so as to receive you into Grace and Favour. But when by sending his own Son to die for us, he had given us so *plain* a Proof of the Sincerity of his Affection towards us, with what face can we suspect his Kindness? For is it likely that he who was so *good* as to give his Son for us whilst we were in Impenitence, should be so *implacable* as to deny his Love to us upon our Repentance and Amendment? Was it not a much *higher* Act of Love to give his Son for Sinners, than to receive *poor prostrate* Penitents into Favour? He then who was so free to do the *former*, we might well imagin would be much more free to do the *latter*. Or lastly, Dare we plead for our selves, that considering the Anxiousness and Jealousy of *guilty* Minds, God had not given us such Security of his Readiness to pardon and be re-

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conciled to us, as was *requisite* to dispel all those Fears and Doubts by which we were discouraged from Repentance and Amendment? But how *weak* and *groundless* this Plea is, will soon appear to all the World, when it shall be considered what an *effectual* Course God took to obviate all our Doubts and Fears by pardoning us in *our own Method*, namely, upon the Motive of a *Sacrifice*, and Intercession of a *Mediator*; especially of such a *Sacrifice* and *Mediator* as his own Son: For let him be never so *severe* and *stern*, yet 'tis impossible he should be *inexorable* to the *vocal* Blood and *importunate* Intercessions of that dear Person, whom he loves above all the World. And now when God had so contrived the Method of his pardoning us, as to take from us all Occasion either of presuming upon his Mercy whilst we continue *impenitent*; when he hath taken such an *effectual* Course to raise both our *Hopes* and *Fears*, which are the Springs of our Action, to their *highest* Pitch and Capacity, and given us the *greatest* Certainty that the Nature of the Thing will bear, that he will punish us *for ever* if we Sin on, and pardon, and receive us into Favour if now at last we will repent and return; what can we say

say for our selves, if in Despite of all *this*
we will run from Mercy whilst its
Arms are open to embrace us, and leap in-
to *Hell* with our Eyes *open*, and we see it
gaping ready to devour us?

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JOHN

JOHN III. 16.

----- *But have everlasting Life.*

I Am now upon the *last* Branch of the Text ; which is to shew you the *great* Goodness of *God* to us in promising to us such a *vast* Reward upon our performing such an *easie* Condition as our *believing in Jesus Christ* ; in which Reward there is *first*, the *privative* Part of it, or the Misery it rescues us from, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish* ; Secondly, the *positive*, or the Happiness it instates us in, *but have everlasting Life*. In the management of which I shall do these two Things ;

1. Shew you why this Reward is termed *Everlasting Life*.
2. How unspeakably *good* God hath been to us in proposing to us such a *vast* Reward.

1. Why this Reward is stiled by the Name of *Everlasting Life* ; For it is very *usual* with *Scripture* to express all the Blessings it promises to Men by the Name of *Life* ; for thus by *Life* the *Old Testament* very

very frequently expresseſſes thoſe *temporal* Bleſſings, which are therein promiſed and propoſed: So Deut. xxx. 15. *See, I have ſet before thee this day, Life and Good, and Death and Evil*; in which he plainly refers to thoſe *temporal* Bleſſings and Curſes, which he had propoſed to, and denounced againſt them, Chap. xxviii. for ſo v. 19. of this Chapter he explains himſelf, *I call Heaven and Earth to record this day againſt you, that I have ſet before you Life and Death, Bleſſing and Curſing: Therefore chuſe Life, that both Thou and thy Seed may live.* So Levit. xviii. 5. *Ye ſhall keep my Statutes and my Judgments: Which if a Man do, he ſhall live in them*; that is, he ſhall enjoy all thoſe *temporal* Bleſſings, which I have therein promiſed: For ſo Ezek. xx. 21. *their living in them* is oppoſed to his pouring out *temporal* Judgments upon them. And hence the Statutes of the *Mosaic Law* are called the *ſtatutes of Life*, in which whoſoever walks, ſhall ſurely Live, and not Die, Ezek. xxxiii. 15. And as theſe *temporal* Bleſſings promiſed in the *Old Teſtament* are commonly expreſſed by *Life*, ſo thoſe *eternal* Bleſſings promiſed in the *New Teſtament* are very frequently expreſſed by *Life* alſo. So Mat. xviii. 8. *It is better for thee to enter into Life halt or maimed, rather than having*

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two Hands or two Feet, to be cast into everlasting Fire. So also Mat. xix. 17. *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* And Joh. iii. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life: And he that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* And because the Blessings which the Gospel proposes are not *temporal* but *eternal*; therefore that Life by which they are expressed is stiled *eternal, everlasting, and immortal*: For so 2 Tim. i. 10. We find *Life and Immortality* joyned together; and Rom. vi. 22. *Ye have your fruit unto Holiness, and the end everlasting Life*; and Vers. 23. *The gift of God is eternal Life.* Now that it is not called *eternal* Life merely as it is a State of *endless* Being and Existence, is evident; because *Being and Existence* are *indifferent* Things abstracted from all sense of Happiness and Misery; but *eternal Life* is proposed to us as a Thing that is infinitely *desirable* in self, as being the Crown and Reward of all our Obedience; for which Reason it is called the *crown of Life*, Jam. i. 12. And therefore the Reason why the *everlasting* Blessings of the Gospel are expressed by *Life* are,
 First, Because of the *inestimable* Worth and Value of *Life*.

Secondly,

Secondly, Because *Life* is the Root of all our Sense of *Pleasure* and *Happiness*.

Thirdly, Because it is the *Principle* of all our Activity.

1. The *everlasting* Blessings of the Gospel are called *Life*, because *Life* is the most inestimably *precious* of all the Blessings we enjoy. For without *Life* there is nothing can be a *real* Blessing to us, nothing that we can *tast*, *relish*, or *enjoy*: And this the *Devil* knew well enough when he pronounced so confidently, *Skin for Skin, yea all that a Man hath will he give for his Life*, Job ii. 4. Now it is usual with *Scripture* to describe the Blessings of the *future* State by Things that are of the *greatest* Value among Men, by *Riches* and *Treasure*, by a *Crown* and a *Kingdom*, by a *Paradise*, or a *Garden of Pleasure*; but as if all these were too *faint* and *dim* to represent the *true* Value of that *blessed* State, it is stiled *Life* also, which is much more *valuable* than either, yea than all those Things together. And hence the *Apostle* calls it a *more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

2. It is called *Life*, because *Life* is the Root of all our Sense of *Pleasure* and *Happiness*. For without *Life* we are nothing else but a Lump of *stupid* and *insensible* *Flesh*, incapable of perceiving either *Plea-*

sure or Pain. So that all Sensation being founded in Life, and all Pleasure a *sweet and grateful* Sensation ; by a very *easy* Figure the *natural* Effect and Operation of Life is expressed by Life. And indeed all the Advantage of *living* consists in living in a Sense of Pleasure ; and therefore it hath been very much disputed among *Philosophers*, whether this *temporary* State of ours, in which there is so *great* an Intermixture of *Pain* with *Pleasure*, and *Misery* with *Happiness*, doth not *better* deserve the Name of *Death* than *Life* ; and those of them who thought it more *liable* to *Misery* than *Happiness*, affirmed it to be a State of *Death*, and strictly maintained this *Paradox*, that at our *Birth* we *die* into a *worse* State than Non-existence, and at our *Death* are *born* into a *true* and *proper* State of Life. But they who counted our *present* Life to be intermixt with more *Pleasure* than *Misery*, esteemed our *present* Existence a Priviledge deserving the Name of *Life* ; which is an Argument that *both* placed all the Priviledge of *living* in those *pleasant* Perceptions that are founded in it. And thus also according to the *Scripture Philosophy* to live, as it imports Advantage to us, is to live in a State of Joy and Pleasure ; so Psal. xxii. 26. *The meek shall eat and be satisfied: They shall praise*

praise the Lord that seek him; your Heart shall live for ever, that is, you shall so abound with Matter of Joy and Praise that your Hearts shall be satisfied and contented for ever. So Joh. xiv. 19. Because I live, ye shall live also; that is, because I rise from the Dead and live for ever, ye shall rejoyce and be glad. So also 1 Thes. iii. 8. For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord; that is we rejoyce in your Constancy and Perseverance, for so it follows immediately after, For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before God? How properly therefore may the future State be expressed by Life, since 'tis the proper Scene of Happiness where Joy and Pleasure doth for ever abound; where there is an inexhaustible Spring of pure unmingled Delights issuing forth in Rivers of Pleasure from God's right Hand for ever? So that if there be any Thing worthy of the Name of Life, it is the blisful State of those happy Souls above, who live in the continued Sense of all those unspeakable Joys and Comforts that an everlasting Heaven imports.

3dly, And lastly, it is called Life, because Life is the Principle of all Activity. 'Tis this that inlivens all our Instruments of Action, and communicates Motion to all our Fa-

culties and Powers. And hence the State of *Heaven* may well be called the State of *Life*, because 'tis a State of the *highest* Activity, wherein all our Faculties act with *unspeakable* Vigour, are freed from all that Weight of Sin and Matter that *here* do continually *clog* and *incumber* them, and entertained with such *agreeable* Objects as do perpetually imploy and exercise them to the *utmost* of their Strength and Activity : Where *infinite* Truth and *infinite* Goodness being always in our View and Prospect, will continually draw forth the *utmost* Force of our *Understandings*, *Wills*, and *Affections* in the most *rapturous* Contemplation, Fruition, and Embracements of that *all-glorious* Object in which we behold them; So that we shall not only Act suitably to the *Genius* of our *rational* Natures, but in every Act shall exert our *utmost* Activity, and *know*, and *love*, and *rejoyce*, and *delight* as much as ever we are able. Wherefore since in that *blessed* State we shall be all *Life* and *Spirit* and *Wing*, since all our *rational* Faculties shall be most incessantly and vigorously imployed about the most *agreeable* and *consentaneous* Objects, we being converted as it were into *pure* Acts of *Knowledge*, and *Love*, and *Joy*, and *Satisfaction* ; our State and Condition may be very well

expressed by *Life*, which is a most *vigorous* Principle of Activity. So that as *Life* is the most *inestimable* Jewel we have, as it is the Root of all our Sense of Pleasure, and the Principle of all our Activity, it doth most properly express the *infinite* Value, Pleasure, and Activity of that *blisful* State which *God* hath prepared to reward our Obedience. And so I have done with the *First* Thing proposed, which was to shew you for what Reason the *eternal* Rewards of the *Blessed* are so frequently expressed by *everlasting Life*.

2. I proceed now to shew you in the *second* Place, how unspeakably good *God* hath been to us in proposing such a *vast* Reward upon the Performance of such an *ease* Condition. In the Management of which I shall first discourse of *this* Reward *absolutely*, and shew you how *great* it is in it self. Secondly, *comparatively*, and shew you how *great* it is in Respect of the Condition upon which it is promised.

1. We will consider it *absolutely* how *great* it is in its self. And here I do not pretend to give you a *perfect* Map of all the *Beatitudes* of that *heavenly* State; for that is a Talk fit only for an *Angel*, or a *glorified* Spirit; all I aim at is to give you such an *imperfect* Account of it as *God* hath thought fit to im-

part

part to Mortals in the *Scripture*, which though it fall infinitely short of the Thing it self, yet is doubtless the *best* and *utmost* that our *narrow* Capacities can bear. In short therefore concerning this *blessed* State, God hath revealed to us, that it includes these six Things :

1. A *perfect* Freedom from *Evil* and *Misery*.

2. A most *intimate* Enjoyment of himself.

3 A most *endearing* Fruition of our *glorified* Saviour.

4. A most *delightful* Conversation with *Angels* and *glorified Spirits*.

5. The *infinite* Glory and *Delightfulness* of the Place, wherein all these *Felicities* are to be enjoyed.

6. The *endless* Duration of this most *blest* and *happy* State.

1. *Everlasting Life* includes a most *perfect* Freedom from *Evil* and *Misery*. For so we find the State of the *Blessed* in *Heaven* described, that *they hunger no more, neither thirst any more*; that *the Sun lights not on them, nor any heat*, that is, that they are no longer liable to the *scorching* Heats of *Persecution*; but that *God hath wiped away all tears from their Eyes*, Rev. vii. 16. 17. And hence also *Heaven* is called a State of *Rest*, Heb.

Heb. iv. 9, 11. *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest:* Which denotes this State to be a *perfect Sabbath*, and *Jubile* of Redemption from all *Evil* and *Misery*. For as soon as the Souls of *good Men* depart out of this *corporeal* State in which they now live, they are immediatly released from all those *bodily* Passions of *Hunger*, and *Thirst*, and *Pain*, and *Diseases* whereunto they are now liable by Reason of their *Union* with the Body; and having in a *great Measure* conquered their Wills while they were in the Body, and subdued them to the Will of *God*, they shall immediately commense into an *high* Degree of Perfection. For being freed from the Incumbrances of *Flesh* and *Blood*, from the Importunities of their *bodily* Passions and Appetites, and the Temptations of *Sensuality* that do now continually solicit them, they shall no longer be liable to those Irregularities of Affection that do *here* disturb the Tranquility of their Minds; and their Actions and Affections being always regulated by their Reason, their Consciences shall be no longer *bestormed* with those Terrors and Affrightments, which nothing but the Sense of Guilt can suggest to them; but enjoy a *perpetual* Calm and Serenity. And being thus freed from all Evils and
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Disquietudes both from *within* and *without*, they shall be at *perfect* Ease, and for ever enjoy a most *undisturbed* Repose. O *blessed* Day, when I shall take my Leave of Sin and Misery for ever, and go to those *calm* and *blissful* Regions, whence *Sighs* and *Tears* and *Sorrows* and *Pains* are banished for ever more!

2. *Everlasting Life* includes a most *intimate* Enjoyment of God. For God being a *rational* Good, is capable of being enjoyed by *rational* Beings no otherwise than by *Knowledge*, and by *Love*, and by *Resemblance*; all which Ways he hath promised that we shall enjoy him, when once we are arrived into that *blissful* State. For as for the *Knowledge* of him St. Paul tells us, that whereas now we see through a *Glass* darkly; we shall then see him *Face to Face*: And whereas now we know in part, then we shall know even as also we are known, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. and St. John tells us, that we shall see him as he is, 1 John iii. 2. Which expressions must needs import such a *Knowledge* of him as is unspeakably more *distinct* and *clear* than any we enjoy in this *present* State. For then the Eyes of our Minds shall be so *invigorated* that we shall be able to gaze on the Sun without *dazling*, to contemplate the *pure* and *immaculate* Glory of the *Divinity* without being confounded with its Brightness; and

and our Understandings shall be so exalted that shall we see more at every *single* View than we do now in *Volumes* of Discourse; and the most *tedious* Trains of Inference and Deduction. And enjoying a most *perfect* Repose both from *within* and *without*, we shall have nothing to disturb or divert our *greedy* Contemplations, which having such an *immense* Horizon of Truth and Glory round about them, shall still discover farther and farther, and so entertain themselves with *everlasting* Wonder and Delight. For what an *infinite* Pleasure will that *all-glorious* Object afford to our *raised* Minds, which then shall no longer labour under the *tedious* Difficulties of Discourse, but like *transparent* Windows shall have nothing to do but only to receive the Light, which freely offers it self unto them, and shines *for ever* round about them; when every *new* Discovery of God, and of those *bottomless* Secrets and Mysteries of his Nature shall enlarge our Capacities to discover more, and still *new* Discoveries shall freely offer themselves as fast as our Minds are enlarged to receive them! This doubtless will be a Recreation to our Minds infinitely *transcending* all that we can conceive or imagin of it, especially considering that all our *Knowledge* shall terminate in *Love*, that *sweet* and *grateful* Passion that *sooths* and

and *ravishes* the Hearts, and *dissolves* it into Joy and Pleasure : For God being infinitely good and *amicable*, the *more* we know him the *more* Cause and Reason we have to love him. When therefore we are arrived to that Degree of *Knowledge* which the *beatifical Vision* implies, we shall find our Hearts inflamed with such a *vehement* Love to him as will issue into an *unspeakable* Delight and Satisfaction, and even overwhelm us with Extasies of Joy and Complacency, for if those *divine* Illapses, those *more immediate* Touches and Sensations of God, which *Good Men* do sometimes experience in *this* Life, do so affect and ravish them that they are even forced into *Triumphs* and *Exultations* ; how will they be wrapt and transported in that State of *Vision*, when they shall see him so immediately, and love him so vehemently, and their Souls shall be nothing else but *entire* Globes of Light and Love, all *irradiated* and *inflamed* with the *immediate Effluvia's* of the Fountain of Truth and Goodness ? But alas ! As these Joys are *too big* for mortal Language to express, so are they *too strong* for *frail* Mortality to bear ; and if we but for one Day or Hour should see God, and love him as those *glorified* Spirits do, we should questionless die with an *Extasy* of Pleasure, and our *glad* Hearts being
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tickled with such *insupportable* Joys, by endeavouring to enlarge themselves to make Room for them, all would quickly stretch into a Rupture. But then as our *Knowledge* of God shall *terminate* in the Love of him, so both together shall *terminate* in our Resemblance of his Perfections; for having so *immediate* a Prospect of his Beauties, and being so infinitely *enamoured* with them, with what *inexpressible* Vigour must we imitate and transcribe them? And our Imitation being *invigorated* with such a *clear* Knowledge and such a *vehement* Love, cannot fail of producing the described Resemblance; so that the more we *know* God, the more we shall *love* him; and the more we *know* and *love*, the more we shall *imitate* and *resemble* him. So that then both our *inward* Motions and *outward* Actions will be all most *pure* and *perfect* Imitations of God which will produce such an *exact* Agreement between his *Original* and our *Copy*, that whilst we interchangably turn our Eyes to God and *our selves*, and compare Beauty with Beauty, it will fill our Minds with *unspeakable* Content to see how the Image answers to the *Prototype*, what a *sweet* Harmony and Agreement there is between *his* Nature and *our own*. For if from our Love of God there must necessarily result

sult to us such *ineffable* Joy and Complacency, what a *ravishing* Delight will it afford us to see the *Signatures* of those *adorable* Beauties for which we love him, stamp and impressed upon *our own* Natures; when the Glory that shines about, and inflames us, shall shine into us and become *our own*; and those *amiable Ideas* of him which are impressed upon our Understanding, shall stamp our Wills and Affections with their own Resemblance! For so the *Apostle* tells us it shall be, 1 John iii. 2. *For when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* Lord, how must our Souls be *enlarged* and *widened* to be able to contain all those *mighty* Joys that must necessarily spring from our Fruition of thee! And to what a Degree of Happiness shall we be advanced, when we shall be entertained with all the delights that the Enjoyment of an *infinite Good* can afford us, and have Hearts *great* enough to contain them all without being *overcharged* with their Weight and Number!

3dly, *Everlasting Life* includes a most *endearing* Fruition of our *glorified Saviour*. And certainly this is none of the *smallest* Ingredients of that *blissful State*, that we shall *ever be with our blessed Lord*; as the *Apostle* expresses it, 1 Thes. iv. 17. For herein it is
evident

evident the same *Apostle* placed one *great* Advantage of his *future* State; for so, he tells us, he had a *desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better*, Phil. i. 23. And indeed 'tis impossible but it must be a *vast* Addition to the Happiness of all *vertuous* and *grateful* Souls to see this *blessed* Friend and Benefactor, who came down from the Bosom of his Father, and for their Sake exposed himself to a *miserable* Life, and *shameful* Death; to see him sitting at his Father's right Hand *crowned* with Majesty and Honour, *surrounded* with the whole Choir of *Angels* and *Saints*, like a *Sun* in the midst of a Circle of Stars. How must it needs rejoyce the Hearts of all the Lovers and Followers of this *blessed* Lamb, to see such a *happy* Change of his Circumstances! To see him that was formerly *despised* and *spit on*, and so unworthily treated by an *ill-natured* World, *adored* and *worshipped*, *praised* and *admired* by all the Court of *Heaven*, and *celebrated* with the Songs of *Cherubins* and *Seraphims*, of *Arch-angels* and *Angels*, and the *Spirits of just Men made perfect*; to behold him, that hung upon the Cross, and poured out his Blood *there* in Groans, and Agonies merely to make *miserable* Sinners *happy*, advanced to the *highest* Pitch of Splendor and Dignity, and made Head and Prince of all

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the *Hierarchy of Heaven*. Verily methinks though I were excluded from that *happy Place*, and had only the Priviledge to look *in* and see my *blessed Lord and Saviour*, it would be a most *heavenly* Consolation to me to behold the Glory and Honour and Happiness with which he is surrounded, though I were sure never to partake of it; and the Communion I should have in the Joys of my Master, the *sweet* Sympathy in all his Pleasures would be a *Heaven* at *second Hand* to me, and I should feel my self unspeakably *happy* in being a Spectator of his Felicity and Advancement. But Oh! When that *dear* and *blessed* Person shall not only permit me to see his Glory, but introduce me into it; when his *blessed* Mouth shall bid me *Welcome*, and pronounce my *Euge* bone Serve! *well done Good and Profitable Servant, enter into thy Masters Joy*; when I shall not only see his *beloved* Face, but be admitted into his *sweet* Conversation, and dwell in his Arms and Embraces *for ever*; when I shall hear him *record* the *wondrous* Adventures of his Love, through how many *woful* Stages he past to rescue me from *endless* Misery; how will my Heart *spring* with Joy and *burn* with Love, and my Mouth *overflow* with Praises and Thanksgivings? O *blessed* *Jesu*! How *happy* will the Day be when I who am
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loaded with so many *vast* Obligations to love thee, shall be introduced into thy Presence, to see thy Glories, and *Sympathize* in thy Joys, as thou didst in my Miseries; to *thank* and *praise* thee Face to Face for all those Wonders of Love with which thou hast obliged me, and to bear a Part in that heavenly Song, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; who hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People and Nation, Rev. v. 9, 12.*

4thly, Everlasting Life includes a most delightful Conversation and Society with *Angels and glorified Spirits*. For when we come to the *City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*, the *Apostle* tells us, what our Society will be, *viz. an innumerable company of Angels, the general Assembly and Church of the first-born, God the judge of all, the Spirits of just Men made perfect, and Jesus the Mediatour of the new Covenant, Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24.* Lord, what glorious Society is here! Society in which there is nothing intermingled, but what is *Heavenly and Divine*; it being altogether composed of the *best and wisest and noblest* Beings in the World. For as for the *blessed Saints* and *Angels*, they are all most perfectly re-

fin'd from all that *Folly* and *Peevishness*, *Disguize* and *Diffimulation* which is the Bane of *humane* Conversation; their Understandings are exceeding *large* and *comprehensive*, and their Charity and Goodness is full as *extensive* as their Knowledge: And in such a Conjunction of Wisdom with Goodness, what an *excellent* Society must there needs be produced? For as their *great* Goodness must needs render their Conversation most *free* and *amiable*, so must their *great* Knowledge and Wisdom render it no less *profitable* and *delightful*; and as the *latter* must needs instruct them in all the *wise* Arts of Endearment, so the *former* must needs oblige them to use and improve them to the utmost. O how *heavenly* therefore must their Conversation needs be, whilst 'tis thus managed by *pure* Wisdom and most *perfect* Love; whilst the most glorious Knowledge is the Scope, and the most *ardent* Friendship the Law of all their Converse! Who would not be willing to leave a *foolish*, *froward*, and *ill-natured* World, for the *blessed* Society of those *wise* Friends, and *perfect* Lovers? And what *greater* Happiness can we desire, than to spend an *Eternity* in such *sweet* Conversation! Where we shall hear the *deep* *Philosophy* of *Heaven* freely communicated in the
wise

wife and *amicable* Discourses of *Angels* and *glorified* Spirits, who mutually impart the Treasures of each others Knowledge without any Reserve or Affectation of Mystery, and freely *philosophize* without *wrangling* Disputes, or *peevish* Contentions for Victory; where Wisdom is the Entertainment, and Love and *mutual* Endearments the Welcome; where there is *Harmony* without *Discord*, *Communication* without *Disputes*, and *everlasting* Discourse without *Wrangling*. O happy Day! When I shall depart from this *impertinent* and *unsociable* World, and all my *good old* Friends that are gone to *Heaven* before me, shall meet me on the Shores of *Eternity*, and congratulate my Arrival to that *blessed* Society! Where I shall freely converse with the *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*, the *Apostles* and *Martyrs*, and be most intimately acquainted with all those *brave* and *generous* Souls, who have recommended themselves to the World by their *glorious* Examples; where *Angels* and *Arch-angels* shall be my *familiar* Friends, and all those *illustrious* Courtiers of the *great* King of *Heaven* shall own me for their Brother, and bid me *welcome* to their Masters Joy, and none will disdain my Company though never so much above me in Glory and Perfection; but from the *highest* to the *lowest*

will all receive and entertain me with the *tendereſt* Indearments of *heavenly* Lovers.

5thly, *Everlaſting Life* includes alſo the *infinite* Glory and Delightfulneſs of the Place wherein all theſe Felicities are to be enjoyed. For though the very State of the *Bleſſed* be ſufficiently *glorious* to transform the moſt *difmal* Place into a *Paradiſe*, and to create a *Heaven* in the *darkeſt* Dungeon of *Hell*; yet ſuch hath been the Goodneſs of *God*, that he hath prepared a Place proportionably *glorious* to that *bleſſed* State; which according to the *Scripture* Account is the *higheſt Heaven*, or the *upper* and *purer* Tracts of the *Æther*. For ſo our *Saviour* tells the *penitent Thief*, *to day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe*, Luk. xxiii. 43. and where this *Paradiſe* is *St. Paul* informs us, 2 Cor. xii. for Verſ. 2. he tells us of his being *caught up to the third Heaven*, which in the 4th Verſ. he calls *Paradiſe*, *where he heard unſpeakable Words*. Now that by the *Third Heaven* he means the *uppermoſt*, *viz.* that *Heaven of Heavens* which is the Throne of *God's* moſt *glorious* Reſidence, where *Jeſus* ſits at his right Hand among the *holy Miriads* of *Angels* and *glorious Spirits*, is evident from this; becauſe according to the *Jewiſh Philoſophy*, to which he here alludes, *Heaven* was divided into *three Regions*, *viz.* the

the Cloud-bearing, Star-bearing, and Angel-bearing Region, the last of which they called the *Third Heaven*, in which they placed the Throne of the *Divine Majesty*. And that by *Paradise* he means the same Place is as evident, because by this Name the *Jews*, in whose Language he speaks, were wont to call it the *Third Heaven*, or *Angel-bearing Region*. And hence *Rab. Menachem on Leviticus*, tells us it is apparent that the Reward of our Obedience is not to be enjoyed in this Life; *Verum post dissolutionem Justus adipiscitur Regnum quod dicitur Paradisus, fruiturque conspectu divino; i. e. but after Death the Just shall obtain that Kingdom which is called Paradise, and there enjoy the beatifical Vision*. And 'tis very usual for them to express the Blessings of the *future Life* by enjoying the Delights of *Paradise*; and therefore is this *heavenly Region of Angels* called by the Name of *Paradise* in Allusion to the earthly *Paradise of Eden*, denoting to us, that as *that* was the Garden of this *lower World*, which of all other Places did most abound with Pleasures and Delights; so *this* is the *Paradise of the whole Creation*, the most *fruitful and delightful Region* within all this *boundless Space of the World*. Nor indeed can it be imagined to be otherwise, it being

the *Imperial Court* which the *great Monarch* of the *World* hath chosen for his *special Residence*, and which he hath prepared to receive and lodge the *glorified humane Nature* of his own *eternal Son*, and to entertain his *Friends and Favourites for ever*. For if these *Out-Rooms* of the *World* are so *royal* and *magnificent*, how infinitely *splendid* must we needs imagin the *Presence-Chamber* of the *great King* to be, the *Glory* of whose *Presence* will render it more *lightsome* and *illustrious* than the *united Beams* of *ten thousand Suns*. And therefore though the *Scripture* hath nowhere given us an *exact Description* of this *glorious Place*, because indeed no *humane Language* can describe it; yet since *God* hath chosen it for the *everlasting Theater* of *Bliss* and *Happiness*, we may reasonably conclude that he hath most exquisitely furnished it with all *Accommodations requisite* for a most *happy* and *blisful Life*, and that the *House* is every way *suitable* to the *Entertainment*. Whensoever therefore a *pure* and *vertuous Soul* gets free from this *Cage of Flesh*, away it flies under the *Conduct* and *Protection* of *Angels* through the *Air* and *Æther* beyond the *Firmament* of *Stars*, and never stops till it is arrived to those *blest Abodes*, where *God* and *Jesus*, *Saints* and *Angels* dwell; where
being

being come, with what *unspeakable* Delight will it contemplate *that* Scene of Things? When all of a suddain it shall see it self surrounded with an *infinite* Splendor and Brightness, so that which way soever it casts its Eyes, it is entertained with *new* Objects of Wonder and Delight; then shall it say, as the *Queen of Sheba* did of *Solomon's Court*, alas! How *faint and dim*, how *short* and *imperfect* were all *humane* Conceits and Descriptions of this *blessed Place*! For though I have heard *great* and *mighty* Things of it, yet now I find that not *one* Half of its *real* Glory and Magnificence hath ever been reported to me.

6thly, And lastly, *Everlasting Life* includes the *endless* Duration of this most *bles-
sed* and *happy* State. Thus Joh. vi. 27. he calls his Doctrine the *meat which endureth unto everlasting Life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you*; and Vers. 40. he tells them that *this was the will of his Father, that every one that believeth on him, might have everlasting Life*; and Vers. 47. *Verily verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me, hath everlasting Life*; and Vers. 51, 54, 58. he promises them that upon their *believing in him, they should live for ever*. But because *Everlasting Life*, and *For ever*, doth in *Scripture* sometimes signify a *long*, but not an *endless* Du-
ration;

ration; therefore he hath taken Care to express this *Article* in such Words as must necessarily denote an *endless* Duration of Bliss; for he not only tells them, Chap. vi. 50. that they who believed his *Doctrine*, should not die, but that *whosoever liveth, and believeth in him, shall never die*, Joh. xi. 26. yea, and not only so, but that they should *never see death*, Joh. viii. 51. that is, should never come within Ken or Prospect of it: Nay, and Luk. xx. 36. he tells them, *neither can they die any more; for they are equal to the Angels*. If then our future Life be so *everlasting* as that it neither can nor shall be terminated by Death, it must necessarily be a Life without End; whose Duration is *parallel to Eternity*. Now what a *mighty* Addition must this needs make to the Joys of the *Blessed*, to consider that they are such as shall never expire; when the Soul shall reflect upon her *happy State*, and think thus with her self, *O blessed, for ever be a good God! I am as happy now as ever my Heart can hold; every Part of me is so thronged with Joy, that I have no room for any more; and that which compleats and crowns them all, is that they shall be renewed to all Eternity, and Millions of Millions of Ages hence be as far from a period as they were the first moment wherein I enjoyed them*. For our Lives and our Happiness shall be

co-eternal to one another, our God shall live for ever, and we shall live for ever to enjoy him, and in the Enjoyment of such an infinite Good we need not doubt to find Variety enough still to renew our Joys, and to keep them fresh and flourishing for ever. For as we shall always know God, so we shall always know him more and more, and every new Beauty that infinite Object discovers to us will kindle a new Flame of Love, and that a new Rapture of Joy, and that a new Desire of knowing and discovering more, and so for ever round again there will be knowing and loving and rejoicing more and more to all Eternity. For so immense will our Happiness be, that we shall need as well as desire an Eternity to enjoy it fully, and after millions of Ages are spent in the Enjoyment of it, we shall still renew our Fruition with the same fresh enravishing Pleasures as when we first possessed and enjoyed it; for as new Pleasures will still present themselves unto us, so when we have enjoyed them never so long we shall still be at an infinite Distance from any End of our Enjoyment. So that our Happiness consisting of an infinite Variety of Pleasures extended to an infinite Duration, we shall neither be cloyed with the Repetition of it, nor tormented with the Fear of losing it.
And

And now you see how *vast* and *immense* the Reward of our *obediential* Belief of our *Saviour* is; I need not tell you that 'tis a *plain* and *apparent* Instance of God's *great* Love and *good* Will to the World; For 'tis indeed such a *transcendent* Instance, as may justly astonish the whole Creation, and put both *Heaven* and *Earth* into an Extasy to see the *benevolent* Father of the World project such *mighty* Entertainments for such *undeserving* Children, and prepare such a *Heaven* of *boundless* and *endless* Pleasure to treat such a Company of *wretched sinful* Worms. O thou *infinite* Love and Goodness! How can we sufficiently *admire* and *praise* thee, that from *such* a *Depth* of Sin and Misery hast projected to raise us to *such* an *Height* of Glory and Felicity? But this will yet more evidently appear, if from the *absolute* Consideration of this Reward we descend to the *comparative*; which was,

2. The second thing we proposed to discourse of, *viz.* to shew how *vast* this Reward is in Respect of the Condition or Consideration upon which it is promised and proposed. And this I shall endeavour to make appear to you in these seven Particulars :

1. The Condition is *due*, but the Reward is *free* and *arbitrary*.

2. The

2. The Condition is no ways *advantageous* to God, but the Reward is infinitely *advantageous* to us.
3. The Condition is *small*, and *easy* to be performed; but the Reward is *immense* and *boundless*.
4. In performing the Condition God operates *more* than we; but in receiving the Reward *we* only are concerned.
5. The Condition is *momentary* and *temporal*, but the Reward is *eternal*.
6. In the performance of the Condition, there are *great* Intermixtures of Pleasure with our Labour, but in the Reward there is not the *least* Intermixture of Misery with Happiness.
7. The Condition *admits* of Intermissions of Labour, but in the Reward there are *no* Intermissions of Happiness.
1. The Condition is *due*, but the Reward is *free* and *arbitrary*. For God being our Creator we ow all our Powers of Action to him; and from this *absolute* Propriety that he hath in our Powers, he derives an *immutable* Right to all the *possible* Service we ~~can~~ render him; so that whilst he enjoyns us nothing but what is *possible*, he only requires what is his *Due*, and what we cannot withhold without a most *injust* Invasion of his Right and Property. For he
being

being the *Supreme* Proprietor of all our Powers and Faculties, must needs have an *eternal* Right to imploy and exercise them as he pleases ; because by so doing he only uses *his own* Goods to *his own* Ends and Purposes, which every Proprietor hath an *unquestionable* Right to do ; so that to *subtract* our Powers from his Use and Service, is to *embezzle* our Masters Goods, and commit *down right* Theft and Robbery. Wherefore, since in the Condition of our *Salvation* he hath required nothing of us but what is *possible* for us to do, this he might have demanded as a *just* Debt, without offering us any Reward for the Payment of it ; but that he should give *us* a *Heaven* only for giving him *his* Due, and bestow upon us for paying what we *owed* him, *infinitely* more than the whole Debt amounts to, is an Expression of Love beyond all Comparison. When he might have justly sent us into this *Theater* to act what Part soever he pleased, have endeared our Duty to us by nothing but its *appendent* Delights, and when we had done, remanded us back into our *Primitive Non-entity* ; yet that he should recompense the *bare* Discharge of that Duty we owe him with the Reward of such an *immortal* Bliss, is such a *stupendous* Height of Goodness, as not only *puzzles* our Conceit, but

but *out-reaches* our Wonder and Admirati-
on.

2dly, The Condition is no ways *advanta-
geous* to God, but the Reward is infinitely
advantageous to us ; for he is so infinitely
happy in the Enjoyment of *himself* and *his
own* Perfections, that all the Services of Men
and Angels can make no Addition to his
Felicity ; which depends wholly upon the
infinite Goodness and Perfection of *his own*
Nature, and is not derived either in *whole*
or in Part from the Tributes or *Free-will* Of-
ferings of his Creatures. For *can a Man be
profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be
profitable unto himself ? Is it any pleasure to
the Almighty that we are righteous ? Or is it
gain to him that we make our ways perfect*, Job.
xxii. 2, 3 ? No certainly ; when he had no-
thing but himself to *contemplate* and *love*,
his Happiness was the same as it is *now* a-
mong all the Praises and Services which he
receives from the World of *Angels* and of
Men ; and if they should revolt from him,
or relapse into *Non-Entity* again, he would
still remain the same most *happy* Being
that now he is, and ever was. For all *true*
Happiness being founded in Perfection, it
it is impossible that any Being that is infi-
nitely *perfect* in himself should become ei-
ther *more* or *less happy* by any Thing that
hap-

happens from without him. So that as to the Happiness of *God*, it is the same Thing whether we obey, or disobey him; so that whatsoever Condition he imposes on us, our Performance of it is but just like bringing *Wax* to a *dying* Father, which he requires not to enrich himself, but only to *seal* away Fortunes to his Children. And that he imposes *this* Condition on us rather than *another*, is not because it is most *advantageous* to him, but because it is most conducive to our Welfare and Happiness: So free and *uninterested* is his Love and Goodness to us, that upon Considerations no ways *advantageous* to himself, he promises *infinite* Advantages to us; for 'tis *we* reap all the Profit as well of the Condition as of the Reward *appendent* to it, and he promises us *Heaven* upon Terms, that carry *Heaven* in the Performance of them. For *first* the Condition *perfects* our Natures, and then the Reward *beatifies* them; for there is nothing in the Condition of the *Christian Covenant* but what *our own* Self-love rightly directed would oblige us to; nothing but what tends to our *good*, and is highly *conducive* to our Perfection and Happiness. So that whatsoever Advantages accrue either from the Condition, or the Reward annexed to it, they all redound to

our

our selves. So infinitely *bountiful* is our *blessed* Master, that with *vast* Wages he hires his Servants to a Work that is a *noble* Reward to it self; and courts them with the Promise of *Heaven* to be *kind* and *merciful* to themselves. O thou *boundless* and *bottomless* Love! What Tongue is able to express thy Beneficence, that hast prepared and promised a *Heaven* of *endless* and *ravishing* Joys and Pleasures only to tempt and bribe thy Creatures to do what is *good* for themselves; and without any Prospect of Self-advantage hast obliged us to be *our own* Benefactors by promising to reward us for being so, with a most *glorious* and *blisful* Immortality?

3dly, The Condition is *small*, and *easy* to be performed; but the Reward is *immense* and *boundless*. For what doth the Lord our God require of us, but only to act like Men, and follow the Prescriptions of *Right Reason*? Which, if there had never been *any* Law given to the World, nor *any* Reward annexed to the keeping it, would have prescribed to us to live *soberly*, *righteously*, and *godly* in this *present* World; for prescinding from all Obligations of Law and Conscience, to do thus becomes all *reasonable* Natures, and is much more for their Interest and Happiness than the contrary.

trary. And is this so *hard* a Restraint to be confined to do nothing but what becomes us, and *with-hold* from nothing but *counter-mining* our own Happiness? But then, if we consider how our Duty is *sweetened* over with Pleasure, *encouraged* with the Smiles of God, and *backt* with the Approbations of *our own* Consciences; with what *gentle* Mitigations it is required, with what *puissant* Motives it is inforced, and with what *powerful* Grace it is assisted and promoted; we must needs acknowledge it to be a most *gracious*, *easie*, and *gentle* Yoke. But if we measure it by the Vastness of the Reward, I confess it looks like some *great* and *mighty* Thing. For if we value God's Bounty by *our own*, we cannot but conclude that sure he would never have made such *vast* Preparations for our Happiness, nor planted such a *Paradise* of Pleasures to entertain us, but upon some *mighty* Condition to be performed on our Part. And indeed had he imposed the *hardest* Condition in the World, sent us to *row* in the *Gallies*, or *dig* in the *Mines* for a *thousand* Years together; such a *vast* Reward would have been *sufficient* to have rendred it not only *rollerable*, but *easie* and *delightful*. But that he should promise us such a *mighty* Recompence as the Joys of an *everlasting* Heaven in-

includes, a Recompence as *large* as our *utmost* Capacities, and as *lasting* as our *longest* Duration ; and this upon no *other* Condition but our *sincere* Belief of, and Obedience to his *Gospel*, whose Precepts are all *natural* and *easy*, and *pregnant* with *unspeakable* Pleasure and Delight ; is such a *Prodigy* of Goodness as we can never sufficiently admire and adore : That meerly for believing a *Revelation*, of whose Truth we have such convincing Evidence, and practising suitably to our Belief, we should from *wretched mortal* Worms, be advanced to an *equal* Pitch of Bliss and Glory with *immortal* Angels, and live as happily *for ever* as all the Joys of *Heaven* can make us, is doubtless such an Instance of Love and Bounty as could only proceed from *infinite* Goodness.

4thly, In performing the Condition, *God* operates more than we ; but in receiving the Reward *we* only are concerned. For to our *sincere* Belief and Obedience of the *Gospel*, it is plain, that *God* contributes much *more* than we ; for besides that he is the Author of all those *Faculties* by which we do believe and obey him, of all those *Evidences* by which we are convinced of the Truth of his *Gospel*, and of all those *Motives* by which we are *animated* in our Obedience

to it; besides all which, I say, he is also the Author of all that *inward* Grace and Assistance by which our *pious* Endeavours are excited and crowned with a *blessed* Success. And considering how much all these Things do operate upon our Performance of the *Gospel-Condition*, it is not only *true* that without God's Grace we should never have performed it, but also that in our Performance of it, *that* is the *main* and *principle* Agent; and no Man ever yet became a *heartly* Believer and Disciple of *Jesus*, but was much *more* beholding to the Grace of *God*, than to his own Activity and Endeavour. And hence we are said *to be created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, Eph. ii. 10. not but that *God* exacts the Concurrence of our Endeavours with his Grace, and that in the Performance of the *Gospel-condition* as well as in any *other* Affair of our Lives. For it is the Blessing of the *Lord* that makes Men *rich* as well as *Good*, and we may as well expect that he should make us *rich* without Industry, as *good* without Diligence and Endeavour; But when we have done our *utmost*, 'tis to the *Grace* of *God* as to the *principal* Cause that all our *good* is to be attributed. But yet though 'tis he that works *this* Condition in us, that is the *Author* and *Finisher* of our *Faith*; yet the
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Reward doth wholly redound to our selves, as if *we* had been the Authors and Finis-
ers of all; and though he hath the *greatest*
Share in the Work, yet he subtracts no-
thing at all from the Wages, but pays us
infinitely *more* than the *utmost* Merit of the
Work amounts to. He gives us *Faith*,
and then he crowns *his own* Gift with *Glory*,
and *Honour*, and *Immortality*. He *sows* and
cultivates our Nature, that we may reap
the *Crop* and *Harvest*. So infinitely *liberal* is
our *blessed* Master as to reward his Servants
for his own Work, to undergo the *greatest*
Part of their Labour, and when 'tis done,
to pay them *Ten Thousand Fold* for it.

5thly, The Condition is *momentary* and
temporal, but the Reward is *eternal*. It is
but a *little little* while that the Labour of
our Duty lasts; for Constancy and Perse-
verance, will soon render it *natural* and *easie*;
and if it did not, yet Death will quickly
put an end to all; and within these very
few Days or Years we shall see an *everlasting*
Period of all the *Pains* of our Watchfulness,
of all the *Severities* of Mortification, and of
all the *Sorrows* of Repentance; but then the
Reward abides to all *Eternity*, and lasts out
to a *never-ending* Duration. So that though
we shall soon see an End of our Work,
yet the Wages is so *vast* that we shall be

spending on it *for ever* ; and *Myriads* of *Myriads* of Ages hence shall be rejoicing in the Fruits of our *present* Labour and reaping the *blisful* Effects of our *Faith* and *Obedience* to the *latest* Moment of *Eternity*. O thou *liberal* Rewarder of Men ! Who can sufficiently admire thy Goodness, that remuneratest our short Pains with *endless* Pleasures, and exchangest with us an *Eternity* of Happiness for the Labour and Service of a *Moment* ? For when we are arrived into that vast *Eternity* of Bliss, all the Pains we have taken in our Voyage thither will hardly bear the Proportion of a *single* *Unit* to an *infinite* *Sum* ; for what are *twenty* or *thirty* Years, but a *moment* to *Ten Thousand Thousand* ? and what are *Ten Thousand* Years, but a *moment* to an *endless* *Eternity* ? So that methinks, when I consider that after *Ten*, or *Twenty*, or *Thirty* Years Service, I shall be allowed an *Eternity* to spend in the most *ravishing* Joys and Pleasures, and live as happily *for ever*, as God and an *everlasting* *Heaven* can make me ; the Bounties of my *blessed* Master appear in such a *prodigious* Bulk to me, that I am even confounded at the Prospect of them ; and all this Time I have to spend in *Religion*, in *Prayer* and *Watchfulness*, in subduing my *Passions* and *Appetites*, and contending with my own
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Inclinations seems nothing to me ; but like a little *Rivulet*, is swallowed up in that boundless and bottomless Duration, where it loses it self, and is no more remembred by me.

6thly, In the Performance of the Condition there are great Intermixtures of Pleasure with our Labour ; but in the Reward, there is not the least Intermixture of Misery with Happiness. That Man must be very much *unexperienced* in a *Christian Life*, who thinks it a *melancholy*, *sower*, and *rigorous* Thing ; for besides that, it freely indulges to us all the *innocent* Gratifications of our Senses, and all the Refreshments of honest Mirth and moderate Recreation ; it hath so many choice and peculiar Pleasures of its own, as are sufficient to endear it unto all wise Men, though it had no other Reward to recommend it : For all the Acts and Functions of it being most agreeable to humane Nature, must needs be highly grateful to it. For what can be more agreeable to a reasonable Nature, than to adore and love, to praise and confide in the Fountain of its Being and Happiness ? And being so agreeable, how can they but abound with Pleasure and Delight ? What can be more suitable to a sociable Nature than to be kind and obliging, courteous and beneficent to all

we converse with? and being so *suitable*, how is it possible but it should be *sweet* and *delightful*? In a word, what can be more *convenient* to a Nature that is compounded of an *immortal* Spirit and a *mortal* Body, than to keep the *Body* in Subjection to the *Mind*, and Govern its Appetites and Passions by the Rules of *Reason* and *Sobriety*? and being so *convenient*, what *Content* and *Satisfaction* must there needs accrue from it? For the Pleasure of every Being consists in acting *agreeably* to its own Nature; and therefore since to act *religiously* is so *agreeable* to the Nature of Man, it is impossible but it must be *pleasant*, especially considering how much it conduces to the *Tranquility* of our Minds, and the *Peace* of our Consciences, and the *Advancement* of our Interests in *both* Worlds: All which being considered, I dare boldly affirm, that if there were no *other* Reward of a *religious* Life, but only its own *appendent* Delights, yet this were enough to recommend it unto any *wise* Man; and that there never was any Man whatsoever that made a *through* Experiment of it, but found it far more *pleasant* and *agreeable* to him, than the most *joyful* Course of Wickedness and Impiety. And yet to this *pleasant* Life it is, that the *good* God doth tempt and invite us by the
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Promise of a *Heaven* of Pleasures ; and though the Life he *wooes* us to hath Joy and Bliss enough in it to compensate all the Toil and Labour of it, yet to oblige us hereunto, he hath made it a most *certain* Passage to a Life of *pure* and *unmingled* Bliss, that hath not the *least* Alloy of Misery in it: For from that most *blissful* Region all *Pain* and *Sorrow*, *Trouble* and *Vexation*, are banished *for evermore*. There are no *Winter-Frosts* of Grief to *nip* or *blast* its *everlasting* Spring of Joy; no *Clouds* to *darken* or *overcast* its *Light*; but we shall *know* without *Mistake*, *love* without *Jealousie*, *obey* without *Reluctancy*, *praise* without *Complaint* or *Murmuring*, and *rejoice for ever* without *Sighing* or *Disturbance*. Lord ! what *amazing* Bounty is this, that thou shouldst crown the most *pleasant* Life upon *Earth* with a most *pure* and *unmingled* Life of Pleasures in *Heaven*, and make *one* Paradise the Reward of *another* ? How deeply art thou concerned in our Welfare, that to oblige us to live happily *here*, hast prepared a *Heaven* of *pure* and *endless* Happiness to entertain us *hereafter* ?

7thly and lastly, The Condition *admits* of Intermissions of Labour ; but in the Reward there are no Intermissions of Happiness. The Performance of the Condition doth

doth not so wholly take up our Lives, as to admit of no Interruptions ; for besides that it not only permits, but requires us to mind our *secular* Business and Affairs ; and is so far from interfering with the Work of our Callings, that it promotes and furthers it ; it doth not so wholly *ingross* our Time, as not to allow us a *sufficient* Season for our *Rest and Recreation* ; so that we may perform all that it includes or requires, without breaking of a *Nights Rest*, or abridging our selves a *Meals Meat*, or retrenching from our *Mirth and Diversions*, any further than *Reason and Sobriety* requires ; and consequently abstracted from the Work of our Callings ; which though it be included in this Condition, yet even our *temporal Interest* obliges us to follow, 'tis by so much the *smallest* Portion of our Lives which we are obliged to spend in the Exercise of our *Religion*. And if we would make but *moderate* Retrenchments from that Time we spend either in doing *nothing*, or nothing to the Purpose ; and together with *that* re-prieve those *precious* Moments we squander away in serving and pampering of our Lusts ; we might serve God faithfully every Day, and yet have as much Time remaining to do our Business, and enjoy our Pleasures as now : We might every Morning say our
Pray-

Prayers, renew our Resolutions, and arm our selves with Considerations against the Temptations of the *Day*; and every *Night* review the Actions of the *Day*, *confess* and *lament* the Defects of them, and recommend our selves to God's Grace and Protection for the *future*; and when all this is done, have as much Time as ever we had before to mind our Affairs, and divert our selves. Nay, so far would this be from any ways hindring our *Business* or *Diversi-on*, that the *sweet* Sense of having done our Duty, would make us much more *cheerful* in the *one*, and give us a far *sweeter* Relish of the *other*. So far is *Religion* from inflaming us to an *uninterrupted* Toil and Labour, that it doth not only allow us all the Intermiissions that our *secular* Business, Reflection, and Pleasure requires; but also sweetens them to us, and renders them much more *grateful*. But as for the Reward which *Religion* draws after it, *that* excludes all Intermiissions of Happiness. For in that most *blissful* State our Life will be all but one *continued* Act of Joy, and to *eternal* Ages there shall not be one *Moment* wherein we shall either be *sensible* of Pain, or *insensible* of Pleasure and Happiness. For as our Happiness will always abound with *fresh* Pleasures, so our Faculties will *never* be

be cloyed with the Enjoyment of them ; for those Pleasures being *pure, rational, and spiritual*, will be so far from spending and weakning our Powers, that they will every Moment strengthen and improve them. So that whereas our Pleasures *here* consist- ing in a *vehement* Motion, are very *transient*, and quickly slip away, and we must *rest* a while before we can renew them, and be- gin the Motion again ; those *heavenly* Plea- sures are such as will indeed most vehe- mently affect and move, but *never* weary the Faculties of the Enjoyer. For still the more we *know* the more we shall *love* ; and the more we *love*, the more we shall *rejoice* ; and the more we *rejoice*, the more we shall *know* and *love* : And so in this *sweet* but *endless* Circle, we shall move round *for ever* with- out Weariness, and be so far from spend- ing our Vigour, that every *Moment* of *Eter- nity* we shall improve it by Exercise and Motion. So that as our Happiness will always abound with *new* Pleasures without any Discontinuance or Intermission, so our Faculties will always renew their Strength and Vigour by Enjoyment. And as there will be no Pause between *one* Joy and *ano- ther*, but they will come so thick upon us *for ever*, that the *Follower* will always tread on the *Foregoers* Heels ; so *one* will still make

make Room for *another*, and those that are *present* will inlarge our Capacity to receive all those that are immediately to follow. And thus shall we spend an *Eternity* without the *least* Intermission of Joy and Pleasure; for we shall always *know*, and always *love*, and always *praise* the Author of our Happiness; and always have a *fresh* Sense of his Goodness *soothing* and *ravishing* our Hearts, and filling them with *ineffable* Joys, without any Ceasing or Interruption. O *blessed* God! what an *amazing* Demonstration is this of thy Love and Goodness to thy Creatures, that for a Work in which there are so *many* Pauses and *daily* Intermissions of Labour, thou shouldst crown us with a Reward, that to all *Eternity* is one *continued* Scene of Happiness without the least Gap or Interruption? So that whether you consider this Reward *absolutely*, and in its self, or *comparatively* with the Condition whereunto it is annexed, you see it is a most *glorious* Instance of God's *unspeakable* Goodness towards us: And now I shall conclude this Argument with a few *practical* Inferences from the whole.

I. I infer how much Reason we have to be contented and satisfied under all the *present* Afflictions of *this* Life. For shall we receive so much *good* at the Hands of God as
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Everlasting Life implies, and not be contented to receive some *Evil*, when our good Father hath provided for us a Crown of *endless* Bliss and Glory *hereafter*? With what Conscience or Modesty can we complain of those *little paternal* Castigations he inflicts on us here? especially considering that the *great* Design of all his *present* Severities is to prepare and discipline us for that *heavenly* State; that by all these *dismal* Providences he is only training us up for a *Crown*; fitting, instructing and disposing us to reign with him in Glory *for ever*? Can any Thing be *unwelcom* to us that is in Order to so *blessed* an End? Can any *Physick* be *nauseous* or *distastful* that is prescribed to recover us into such an *happy* Immortality? No doubtless; every Thing that leads *Heavenwards*, though never so *grievous*, is a Blessing, and all those *kind* Severities that tend to our *eternal* Welfare, are Favours for which we are bound to *praise* and *adore* the Goodness of *Heaven for ever*. When therefore we find our selves inclined to complain under our *present* Pressures and Afflictions, let us lift up our Eyes to *yonder blessed Regions*, and consider the *Jays* and *Pleasures*, the *Crowns* and *Triumphs* that do there await us; and how *necessary* these *bitter* Trials are to prepare us for, and waite

us to them : And if this doth not *stop* our Mouths, and silence our Complaints *for ever* ; nay, if it doth not cause us to rejoice in our Tribulations, and to thank God for them on our *bendid* Knees ; if it doth not make us chearfully submit and say, *Ore, Seca, Vulnera, Lord ! cut, or wound, or burn me ; if thou seest fit, strip me of all my dearest Comforts ; handle me as severely as thou pleasest, so I have my Fruit unto Holiness, and my end everlasting Life* ; we are infinitely foolish and ungrateful. For 'tis but a little while e're all these *Storms* will clear up into an *everlasting* Calm ; e're all these *dismal* Clouds will vanish, and an *everlasting* Day break forth upon us, whose Brightness shall never be obscured with the *least* Spot or Relique of Darknes. And when that *blessed* Time comes, *Lord !* how *trifling* and *inconsiderable* will all our *present* Grievs appear ? With what Contempt shall we reflect upon our *present* Cowardise and meanness of Spirit, that would not bear without Murmuring with a *few* Inconveniencies on the Road to such an *immortal* Heaven of Pleasure ? Wherefore if our Voyage be not so *pleasant* as we would have it, yet let us remember 'tis not *long* ; we have but a *short* Days Sail to an *Eternity* of Happiness ; and when once we are landed on that *blessed* Shore,
with

with what *ravishing* Content and Satisfaction shall we look back on the *rough* and *boisterous* Seas we have past, and for ever *blest* the Storms and Winds that drave us to that *happy* Port! Then will the Remembrance of these *light* Afflictions serve only as a *Toil* and *Anti-mask* to our Happiness, to set off its Joys, and render them more *sweet* and *ravishing*. Let us therefore comfort our selves with these Things ; and when at any Time our Spirits are sinking under any *worldly* Trouble or Affliction, consider that while we have a *Heaven* to hope for, we can never be *miserable* ; for so long as we are guarded with this *mighty* Hope, our Mind will be *impregnable* against all *foreign* Events, and maugre all Afflictions from without, its Serenity will shine as undisturbedly as the Lights of *Pharos* in the midst of Storms and Tempests.

II. Hence I infer, what a *vast* deal of Reason we have to slight and contemn *this* World. For it is plain, that we are born to infinitely *greater* Hopes than any *this* World can propose to us, even to the Hopes of *everlasting* Life: And being so, methinks our Ambition should soar as *high* as our Hopes, and disdain such *low* and *ignoble* *Quarries*, as the *Pleasures*, and *Profits*, and *Honours* of this Life. Certainly Sirs, we
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mistake the Scene of our *Eternity*, or imagine that it is removed from *Heaven* to *Earth*; and so we are to enjoy our *everlasting* Life below; or else we are most strangely *besotted*, who when we are born to live *for ever above* in the most *ravishing* Glory and Happiness, can suffer our selves to doat upon *this* World, and to be so strangely *bewitched* as we are by its *deluding* Vanities. O! could we but stand a while in the *Mid-way* between *Heaven* and *Earth*, and at one Prospect see the Glories of *both*, how *faint* and *dim* would all the Splendors of *this* World appear to us in Comparison with those above? How would they *sneak* and *disappear* in the Presence of that *eternal* Brightness, and be forced to shroud their *vanquished* Glories, as *Stars* do when the *Sun* appears? And whilst we interchangeably turned our Eyes from *one* to *another*, with what Shame and Confusion should we reflect upon the wretched *groveling* Temper of *our own* Minds? what *poor mean-spirited* Creatures we are to satisfy our selves with the *impertinent* Trifles of *this* World, when we have all the Joys of an *everlasting* *Heaven* before us, and may, if we please, after a *few* Moments Obedience be admitted into them, and enjoy them *for evermore*? Ah! *foolish* Creatures that we are, thus to

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prefer a *far* Countrey, where we live on nothing but Husks, before an *everlasting* *Festivity*, that is celebrated in our Father's House! where the *meanest* Creature hath Bread enough, and to spare: To chuse *Nebuchadnezzar's* Fate, and leave *Crowns* and *Scepters*, and live among the *salvage* Herds of the Wilderness! Could the *blessed* *Saints* above divert so much from their more *happy* Employments, as to look down a *little* from their *Thrones* of *Glory*, and see how busy *poor* Mortals are in scrambling for this *wretched* Pelf, which within a *few* Moments they must leave *for ever*; how they *jostle*, and *rencounter*, *defeat*, *defraud*, and *undermine* one another; what a most *ridiculous* Spectacle would it appear to them? with what Scorn would they look on it; or rather, with what Pity, to see a Company of *heaven-born* Souls, capable of, and designed for the same *Glory* and *Happiness* with themselves, groveling like *Swine* in *Dirt* and *Mire*; one priding it self in a *gay* Suit, a *nother* hugging a *Bag* of *glistening* Earth, a *third* stewing and dissolving it self in *Luxury* and *Voluptuousness*, and all imployed at that *poor*, and *mean*, and *miserable* Rate, as might justly make these *blessed* Spirits ashamed to own their *Kindred* and *Alliance*? To tell you truly and seriously my Thoughts,

I cannot imagine, but if when we are thus extravagantly concerned about the pitiful Trifles of *this* World, the *blessed* Spirits do see and converse with us, it is a much more *ludicrous* and *ridiculous* Sight in their Eyes, to see us thus fillily concerned and imployed, than it would be in us to see a Company of Boys with *mighty* Zeal and Concern *wrangling* and *crying*, *striving* and *scrambling* for a Bag of *Cherry-stones*. Wherefore in the Name of God, Sirs, let us not expose our selves any longer to the *just* Derision of all the World, by our *excessive* Dotage upon the *trifling* Vanities of *this* Life; but let us seriously consider that we are all concerned in Matters of much *higher* Importance, even in the *unspeakable* Felicity of an *everlasting* Life.

3dly. Hence I infer how *unreasonable* it is for *good* Men to be afraid of *Dying*, since just on *the other* side the Grave you see there is a State of *endless* Bliss and Happiness prepared to receive and entertain them; so that to them *Death* is but a *dark* Entry out of a *Wilderness* of Sorrow into a *Paradise* of *eternal* Pleasure. And therefore if it be an *unreasonable* Thing for *sick* Men to dread their *Recovery*, for *Slaves* to tremble at their *Jubilee*, or for *Prisoners* to quake at the News of a *Goal-delivery*; how much more *unrea-*

sonable is it for good Men to be afraid of Death, which is but a *momentary* Passage from *Sickness, Labour, and Confinement* to *eternal Health, and Rest, and Liberty*? For God's sake consider, Sirs, what is there in *this* World that you have Reason to be fond of, what in the *other* that you need be afraid of? Suppose that now your Souls were on the *Wing* mounting upwards to the *celestial Abodes*, and that at some convenient Stand between *Heaven and Earth*, from whence you might take a Prospect of both, you were now making a Pause to survey and compare them with *one another*; that having viewed over all the Glories *above*, and tasted the *beatifical* Joys, and heard the *ravishing* Melodies of *Angels*, you were now looking down again with your Minds *filled* with these *glorious* Ideas, upon this *miserable* World, and that all in a View you beheld the *vast* Numbers of Men and Women that at this Time are *fainting* for Want of Bread, of *young Men* that are hewn down by the Sword of *War*, of *Orphans* that are weeping over their Fathers Graves, of *Mariners* that are shrieking in a Storm, because their *Keel* dashes against a Rock, or bulges under them; of *People* that are groaning upon *Sick-Beds*, or racked with Agonies of Conscience; that are *weeping*
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with Want, *mad* with Oppression, or *desperate* by *too quick* a Sense of a *constant* Infelicity: Would you not, do you think, upon such a Review of *both* States be infinitely glad that you are gone from hence, that you are out of the Noise and Participation of so many Evils and Calamities? Would not the sight of the Glories *above* and the Miseries *beneath* you make you a *Thousand* Times more *fearful* of returning *hither* than ever you were of going *hence*? Yes doubtless it would. Why then should not our Sense of the Misery *here*, and our Belief of the Happiness *there*, produce the *same* Effect in us, make us willing to remove our Quarters, and exchange *this Wilderness* for *that Canaan*? 'Tis true indeed, the Passage from *one* to *another* is commonly very *painful* and *grievous*; but what of that? In other Cases we are willing enough to endure a *present* Pain in order to a *future* Ease; and if a *few mortal* Pangs will work a *perfect* Cure on me, and recover me into *everlasting* Bliss and Life, methinks the Hope of this *blessed* Effect should be sufficient to sweeten and in dear *that* Agony, and render it *easy* and *desirable*. But alas! To *die* is to leave all our Acquaintance, to bid *adieu* to our *dearest* Friends and Relations, to pass into an *unknown* State, to converse with

Strangers whose Laws and Customs we are not acquainted with ; why now all that looks *sad* in this is a very *great* mistake ; for I verily hope that I have more Friends and Acquaintance and Relatives in *Heaven* than I shall leave behind me here on *Earth*, and if so, I do but go from *worse* Friends to *better* ; for *one* Friend *there* is worth a *Thousand* *here* in Respect of all those *endearing* Accomplishments that render a Friend a Jewel. But if I die a *good Man* I shall carry into *Eternity* with me the *Genius* and Temper of a *glorified* Spirit, and that will recommend me to the Society of *Heaven*, and render the Spirits of those *just Men*, whose Names I never heard of, as *dear* Friends to me in an Instant as if they had been my *ancient* *Cronies* and Acquaintance. But why should I grieve at parting with my Friends *below*, when I shall go to the *best* Friend I have in all the World ; to *God my Father*, to *Jesus my Redeemer*, and to the *Holy Ghost my constant Comforter and Assistant*. And what though the State and the Laws and Customs of it be in a *great* Measure unknown to me ? Yet what I know is infinitely *desirable*, from whence I may reasonably infer that what I know not is so too ; and if I have but the Temper of *Heaven*, I am sure I shall easily comply with the

the *heavenly* Laws and Customs of it. So that in the whole, I cannot imagine why any *good Man* that seriously believes the Doctrine of a *blessed Immortality*, and hath a *just well-grounded Hope* of being made Partaker of it at the Expiration of this *mortal Life*, should be so loath to leave *this wretched World*, and expire into *that blessed Eternity*. I do not deny, but the Circumstances of our Affairs in this Life are many times such as may justly excuse even a *good Mans* Willingness to die; some *great Opportunities* of doing *Good* may present themselves, and invite him to stay a *little longer*; or his having begun his Repentance *late*, or not having made a *competent Provision* for his Family may for a Time justify his Unwillingness to depart; and render it both *excusable* and *reasonable*. But unless it be in these *excepted Cases*, methinks I can hardly reconcile our *Hopes* of Happiness with our *Fear* of Death. For when I am verily persuaded that *Death* is only a *narrow Stream* running between *Time* and *Eternity*, and I see my *God* and my *Saviour* with Crowns of Glory in their Hands beckoning to me from the *farther Shoar*, and calling to me to come over and receive those *happy Recompences* of my Industry and Labour, that I like a *naked timorous Boy* should stand shivering on

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this *Bank of Time*, as if I were afraid to dip my Foot in that *cold Stream of Fate*, which as soon as I am in I am past, and in the Twinkling of an Eye will land me on *eternal Bliss*, is such an *extravagant Inconsistency*, as (if I did not feel it in me) I should never believe I could be guilty of.

4thly. And lastly, Hence I infer what a *vast deal* of Reason we have to be *diligent* and *industrious* in *Religion*, since God hath proposed such a *vast Reward* to us to encourage and animate our Industry. How can we account any Work hard, of which *Heaven* is the Wages? How can we faint in our *Christian Race* when we see the Crown of Glory hanging over the Goal? Methinks this should be enough to infuse Life and Spirit into the most *crest-fallen* Souls, to make *Cripples* run, and to convert the most *sneaking* Coward into a *bold* and *magnanimous* Hero. For how much Pains do we ordinarily take upon far *less* Hopes? in Hope of a *little transitory* Wealth which we know we shall enjoy but a *few* years, and then part with *for ever*, we thrust our selves into a *perpetual* Croud and Tumult of Business, where with *vast* Concern and Thoughtfulness, with *eager* and *passionate* Prosecutions, with *endless* Brauls and Contentions, with *jostling* and *rencountering* one
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another, we toil and weary our selves, and make our Lives a *constant* Drudgery : And shall we flag when *Heaven* is the Object of our Prosecutions, who are so *active* in the Pursuit of Trifles ? Whensoever therefore we find our Endeavours in *Religion* begin to *jade* and *droop*, let us lift up our Eyes to the Crown of *Glory*, and if we are capable of being moved by Objects of the *greatest* Value, *that* must infuse *new* Vigour into us, and make us all *Life* and *Spirit*, and *Wing*. For what though my Way lies *up* the Hill, and leads me along through Thorns and Precipices ; so that I am fain to sweat at every Step ; and every Ascent is a Toil to me : Yet when I am *up*, I am sure to be entertained with such *pleasant* Gales and *glorious* Prospects, as will fully recompence all my Toil in climbing thither. There with an *over-joyed* Heart I shall sit down and *bless* my Labours : Blessed be you my *bitter* Agonies and *sharp* Conflicts, my *importunate* Prayers, and *well-spent* Tears ; for now I am fully repaid for you all, and do reap *ten thousand* Times more Joys from you than ever I endured Pains. For what are the Pains of a *Moment* to the Pleasures of an *Eternity* ? Wherefore hold out my *Faith* and *Patience* yet a little longer, and your Work will soon be at an end ; and after a
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few laborious Week-days, you shall keep an *everlasting Sabbath*. What though my Voyage lie through a *stormy Sea*, yet 'tis to the *Indies of Happiness*; and a *few Leagues* farther lies the *blessed Port*, where I shall be crowned as soon as I am landed. Go on therefore, *O my Soul*, with thy *utmost Courage* and *Alacrity*; for let the *Winds bluster*, and the *Waves swell* never so much, yet thou canst not miscarry, unless thou wilt. Thou art not like *other Passengers* left to the *Mercy of Wind and Weather*, but thy *Fate* is in thy *own Hands*; and if thou wilt but have *thy Fruit unto Holiness*, *thy End shall be everlasting Life*.

i Epist.

1. Epist. JOHN IV. 19.

We love him, because he first loved us.

I Have shewed you in the former Discourses how indispensably necessary it is that we should love God in Order to our being truly religious; and proved to you at large, that of all Principles of Religion whatsoever, *this* is the most operative and effectual. And then to excite this heavenly Affection in you, I have shewn you that the Goodness of God is the principal Motive that engages our Love to him. And now that I may more largely explain the Nature and Measures of *this* Love as it is our Duty, and engage you to it by this grand Motive of the divine Goodness, I have made choice of this Text, *We love him, because he first loved us.*

The Greek Word, *αγαπᾶμεν* here may as well be rendered *subjunctively*, to signify what we ought to do, as *indicatively* for what we already do; and indeed it seems more suitable to the Context to render it *we should, or ought* to love him, than *we love* him. For in the former Verses the Apostle earnestly

ly presses *Christians* to love one another upon the Consideration of God's great love to them; and then considering how naturally their Love to one another, would follow upon their mutual Love to God, he concludes, that the most effectual Course to oblige them to love one another, was to excite them to the Love of God upon the Consideration of his great Love to them. For saith he, *Verf. 20. If a Man say, I love God, and hate his Brother, he is a liar; because Light it self is not more inseparable to the Sun than Brotherly-Love is to the Love of God: So that unless we render ἀγαπᾷμεν αὐτὸν, we should love him, as we shall evacuate the Necessity of the Apostles Counsel, so we shall disturb the Order and Method of his Argument. For if we render it Indicatively, We love him, it will thence necessarily follow that we shall also love one another, and so there would be no Need of the Apostles Counsel, and then the Words will be wholly impertinent to the Argument; which, as I have shewed, is to excite us to the Love of God, and thereby to engage us to love one another; but what need he excite us to do that which he himself confesses we did already? If therefore we render the Word subjunctively, as it seems most reasonable we should, this will be the Sense of the Text,*
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We are bound in duty to love God, because he first loved us; according to which Sense here is,

First, a *Duty*, We ought to love God.

Secondly, a *Reason* of it, because he first loved us.

I. I begin with the Duty, We ought to love him. In handling of which I shall do these two Things.

1. Shew you what it is to love God. 2. In what Degrees and Measures we are bound to love him. And in explaining what this Love of God is I shall shew you,

First, Wherein the *Being* and *Essence* of it consists.

Secondly, What are its *essential* Characters and Properties.

1. Wherein the *Being* and *Essence* of our Love of God consists? To which I answer in general, that this Love of God consists in a *rational*, *fixed*, *affecting* Delight and Complacency in the *divine* Goodness and Perfections. But that we may the better understand the Nature of this *heavenly* Virtue, and more exactly distinguish it from those *wretched* Counterfeits that commonly usurp its Name, and are too to often mistaken for it, it will be necessary to explain the *several* Terms whereof its Definition is composed.

1. There-

1. Therefore I say 'tis a *Delight* and *Complacency*.
2. It is a *rational* one.
3. *A fixed*.
4. An *affecting* one.
5. 'Tis terminated on the *divine Goodness* and *Perfections*.

1. The Love of God consists in *Delight* and *Complacency*. And indeed this is the *proper* Act of Love, as it is distinguished from all other Passions. For we find by experience, that the *first* Act of our Minds upon the Apprehension of a *lovely* Object, is *Delight* and *Complacency* in the View or *Contemplation* of it; and when any *amiable* Object presents it self to our Sense, or to our Minds, or Fancies, it causes our Thoughts to *pause* and *stay* themselves a while upon it till we have viewed it round about, and drawn its Picture in our Minds, and when we have done, the very *first* Expression of our Love to it, is to be *well pleased* with the Contemplation of it; and while we review it *over* and *over*, to be sweetly *ravished* and *delighted* with the *charming* Prospect of its Beauty. And from this *prime* and *essential* Act of Love arises all those *consequent* Affections of *Hope*, *Benevolence*, and *Desire* of Fruition: For the reason why we *wish* well to, *hope* for, or *desire* to enjoy any Ob-

Object, is because we are *well-pleased* with it, and do find a *sweet* Content and Satisfaction in that Picture or *Idea* of it which we have drawn upon *our own* Minds. So that the very Essence of Love, you see, consists in a *Well-pleasedness* arising from the *apprehended* Goodness and Congruity of the Thing *beloved*; and 'tis meerly by Accident that there is *any other* Emotion intermingled with this *grateful* Affection. For if it were not for the Want of what we love, if there were no Distance between *us* and the Objects of our Affection, our Love would be all but one *pure continued* Act of Complacency and Delight; for if all our Needs were fully satisfied, we should love without either *Desire* or *Hope*, both which imply Want and Absence from the Objects of our Love; which is a *plain* Evidence, that Complacency is the very Essence of Love, since there may be Love without *Hope*, or *Desire*, or *any other* Passion mingled with it; but without Complacency there can be none. 'Tis true, the Degrees of Love's Complacencies are much *greater* in the Fruition of its Objects, than they are in the Pursuit of them, but still 'tis of the *same* Kind; for 'tis the Delight we take in an Object that makes us desire to enjoy it; but in the Enjoyment our Desire expires into an *higher* Degree

Degree of Delight and Satisfaction. For Desire and Delight are only the *Wings* and *Arms* of Love; *those* for Pursuits, and *these* for Embraces; but 'tis the *Arms* that give the *Wings* both Motion and Rest, the Delight we take in the Objects of our Love, that both *inflames* and *quenches* our Desire. So that though in this *indigent* State *Hope* and *Desire* are *inseparable* to our Love, yet that is by Accident; but as for its Essence and Definition it wholly consists of *Delight* and *Complacency*. And therefore if our Love of God hath the *common* Notion of Love in it, as questionless it hath, it must necessarily consist in our being *well-pleased* and *delighted* in the Beauty, and Goodness, and Perfection of his Nature. And accordingly we find in *Scripture* that our Love to God and God's Love to us is expressed by delighting in *one another*; so Prov. iii. 12. *For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth, even as a Father the Son in whom he delighteth*, i. e. whom he loves. So also our Love to God is expressed by delighting in him, Psal. xxxviii. 4. *Delight thy self also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine Heart.*

2ly. The Love of God is a *rational* Delight and Complacency in him; by which it is distinguished from those *sensible* Emotions

tions of *bodily* Passion which many times are nothing else put the *natural* Effects of an *over-heated* Fancy. For I make no doubt but a Man may be wrapt even into an Extasy of *sensible* Delight and Complacency in God; that is, upon an *amiable* Representation of God, his Spirits may be made to flow in a *sweet* and *placid* Torrent to his Heart, and by their *nimble* Motions about it to *sooth* and *tickle* it into a most *sensible* Pleasure, till it opens and dilates its Orifices, and the *grateful* Flood breaks in and drowns it in Delight and Ravishment. And yet in all this *mighty* Storm and Commotion of Passion there may not be the *least* Spark of sincere Love to God; For all this not only may be, but many times is nothing else but the mere *Mechanism* and *Natural* Effect of a *warm* and *vigorous* Fancy, which being flushed with such *brisk* and *active* Spirits as are most apt to be figured into *amorous Phantasms* and *Ideas*, can with these without any Assistance from Reason raise great Commotions of Joy in the Heart; especially where the Temper is *soft*, and the Passions *easy* to be wrought upon. And of the Truth of this the *Histories* of the *Devotos* of all *Religions* will furnish us with *sufficient* Experiments. For even among the *Turkish* and *Heathen Saints* there are as

notorious Instances of these *sweet* Incomes and Manifestations, as among *our own* ; and the same *sensitive* Complacencies which ours too often mistake for the *Sealings* and *Witness* of the Spirit, they frequently experience in their Communion with *Mahomet*, *Bacchus*, and *Apollo*. So that to conclude that we love God from those *corporeal* Passions, is very *unsafe* and *dangerous* ; and we may almost as certainly judge of the Hunger of our *Souls* after Righteousness by the Hunger of our *Bodies* after Bread, as of the Love of our *Souls* to God by our *bodily* Ravishments and Passions. For *bodily* Passion differs according to the Temper of the Body ; *some* Tempers are so *soft* and *impressive*, that the most *frivolous* Fancy will affect them ; *others* so *hard* and *sturdy*, that the *greatest* Reason will hardly move them ; and consequently Persons of *this* Temper, though they should love God much *more* than the *other*, and have a much *higher* Esteem of, and more *rational* Complacency in his *divine* Perfections ; yet will have much *less* of *corporeal* Passion intermingled with it. I do not deny, but even this *sensitive* Passion, when prudently managed, may be of *great* Advantage to a *rational* Love ; for the Passions being *soft* and *easy*, and apt to follow the Motions of the Soul,

Soul, do naturally *intend* and *quicken* them, and render them more *vigorous* and *active*; and we have very much Cause to *bleſs* God even for that *ſenſitive* Joy and Complacency which accompanies our Love to him, ſince this, I doubt not, is many times excited by his own *bleſſed Spirit*, to *quicken* and *invigorate* our *rational Affection*, and render it more *active* and *vivacious*. But that which I aim at is only this, if poſſible to beat Men *off* from meaſuring the *Strength* or *Weakneſs*, the *Truth* or *Falſhood* of their Love to God by any *corporeal Paſſion* whatſoever; ſince Men may, we ſee, and many times have a *vehement Paſſion* without any Reason, and all thoſe *Ticklings* and *Raviſhments* of Heart which too many Men miſtake for the Love of God, are very often nothing elſe but the *neceſſary Effects* of a *chafed and overheated Fancy*. But that which is really the Love of God is always founded in a *rational Conviction* of the Beauty and Goodneſs of his Nature, and proceeds from an *high Eſteem* and *profound Veneration* of his Perfections. For no Man loves God, but can give very *good Reason* why he loves him; he is not moved to it by a *Muſical Tone*, or a *gaudy Metaphor*, or an *unaccountable Impulſe* of Fancy; but by the *real Charms* and *Attractions* of the *divine Good-*

ness and Perfections, which darting *through* his Mind, like the Sun-beams through a *Burning-glass*, have kindled his Affections, and made him love with *infinite* Reason ; so that 'tis his *Understanding* that *inamours* his *Will*, and that which makes him a Lover of *God* is the *deep* Sense of his Reason, how much he deserves to be beloved. He hath seriously considered how lovely *God* is in himself, how *kind* and *loving* unto all his Creation, and what *particular* Obligation *God* hath laid upon him to return him Love for Love ; and this gives Fire to his Love, and affects his Will with Delight and Complacency ; and though perhaps he may not feel those *passionate* Soothings and Expansions of Heart which *sensitive* Joy is wont to produce, yet he finds himself highly pleased with *God*, and his Will acquiesces in the Thought of his Goodness and Perfections with a *Calm* and *even* Complacency : And thus his Will is inflamed with the *purest* Light of his Understanding, and his Love is nothing else but the *warm* Reflection of his Reason. Thus Psal. cxvi. 1. *I love the Lord*, saith *David*, and then he goes on to enumerate the *vast* and *important* Reasons why he loved him ; *because he hath inclined his Ear*, &c. And in the 1 Cor. viii. 3. *If any Man love God, the same*, i. e. *God*, is
known

known of him ; intimating that all *true* Love of God is founded in the Knowledge of him.

3dly, The Love of God is a *fixed* as well as *rational* Complacency in him, by which I distinguish this *heavenly* Affection from those *short* and *transitory* Fits of Love, that like Flashes of Lightning come and go, appear and *vanish* in a Moment. For thus upon some *affecting* Providence, or *passionate* Representation of the *Divine* Goodness, it is very ordinary for Men to be chafed into an *amorous* Fit, and touched with very *tender* Resentments of the Loveliness and Love of God ; so that at *present* they seem to be in Raptures of Affection, and, with the *Spouse in the Canticles*, to be *wondrous sick of Love* ; but alas ! It commonly proves but a *sudden* Qualm, that after a Pang or *two* goes over, and so they are well again immediately ; for upon their *next* Encounter with Temptation, or Intermixture with *secular* Affairs, their *hot* Love begins to languish, and quickly dies into a *cold* Indifference ; and notwithstanding all the Reasons and Obligations that they have to the contrary, their *fickle* Hearts unwind again, and by Degrees decline and sink into their *old habitual* Aversion to God and Goodness ; which is a *plain* Evidence that *that* which at first lookt like the Love of God

in them, was only a *sudden* Blush of Passion, and not the *true* Complexion of their Souls. For when once a Man is brought to love God upon Principles of Reason and Consideration, 'tis much more *difficult* to extinguish this, than any *Virtue* whatsoever ; because of all the *Virtues* of Religion this is founded in the *greatest* Reason, and accompanied with the *strongest* Pleasure. For Love it self consisting in *Delight* and *Complacency*, where the Object of it is an *infinite Good*, there is not only *infinite* Reason to Love, but *infinite* Occasion of Pleasure and Complacency. When therefore our Love of God is back'd with so *much* Reason, and sweetened with so *much* Pleasure, how is it possible we should extinguish it without doing the *greatest* Violence to our selves ? For I am verily persuaded, that one of the hardest *moral* Changes that can be made upon a *rational* Creature, is from a *Lover* to become an *Enemy* to God ; for wheresoever this *heavenly* Affection is, it sweetens and endears it self by its own *appendent* Pleasures, which are in themselves a *sufficient* Counter-charm against all Temptations to the contrary. So that when once it is kindled in the Soul, like a *subtil* Flame 'twill by Degrees *insinuate* farther and farther, till it hath eaten into the *Center* of the Soul,
and

and turned it all into its *own* Substance. Wherefore this we may certainly conclude upon, that he who can suddenly or easily entertain an Aversion to God and Goodness, did never truly Love; for Love, saith the *Wise Man*, is *strong as Death*, and many *Waters cannot quench it*, Cant. viii. 6, 7. Wheresoever it lights it clings, and can never be torn away again without *violent* Spasms and Convulsions. So that whatsoever Passion we may have for God, we can never conclude it to be *heartly* Love till it fixes and settles in our Souls; till our Wills are *habitually* pleased with God, and do entertain the Thoughts of his Love and Loveliness, with a *constant* Complacency and Delight; and then we may venture to call it Love, and to rejoyce in the Nativity of this *heavenly* Flame within us.

4thly, 'Tis an *affecting* Delight and Complacency in God; by which I distinguish it from a *mere* Liking and *naked* Approbation. For God is a Being so infinitely *amiable* and *benevolent*, that 'tis impossible almost for any *reasonable* Creature to know him, and not *like*, and approve of him. But though in all Approbation there is *some* Degree of Complacency, yet there is no Doubt but a Man may approve of what he doth not Love, and there is no Doubt but there are

many Men that do approve of *God* as the most *glorious* and *excellent* of Beings, and the most *worthy* of Love and Veneration, who yet have not one Spark of *real* Love towards him. For thus *St. Paul*, we find, when he was a *Jew* in Religion, approved of the Law *as holy, and just, and good*, Rom. vii. 12. and that in this Approbation of his there was some Degree of Complacency and Delight, for saith he, *I delight in the Law of God according to the inward Man*, Vers. 22. but all this while he was very far from having any *real* Love and Affection for it; for in the next Verse he tells us, that he had a *Law in his Members warring against the Law of his Mind*; that is, he had an *inward* Repugnancy and Aversion against this *excellent* Law, which his Reason did approve of as *holy* and *just* and *good*; and no Degree of *true* Love could consist with such an Aversion. And there is no doubt but most Men who have *right* Conceptions of *God*, do in their Mind and Reason as much approve of, and delight in the Perfection of his Nature, as *St. Paul* did in the Perfection of his Law; and yet their Wills are as *repugnant* and *averse* to the Holiness and Purity of the *one*, as *St. Pauls* then was to the Justice and Goodness of the *other*. Wherefore to constitute us *true* Lovers of
God;

God, it is *necessary* that our *Approbation* of, and *Delight* and *Complacency* in him should be such as doth powerfully affect our Wills and reconcile them to the Nature of God. For whilst our Wills are *averse* to that *immaculate* Purity and Goodness which is so *inseparable* to his Nature, it is impossible we should heartily love him; and though in our Minds we may approve of him as a most *glorious* and *excellent* Being, yet in our Hearts we shall still retain a *secret* Antipathy against him. And I doubt not but the *Devils* themselves do so far approve of God, as to acknowledge him altogether *amiable* and *lovely*; for if they do not, I am sure they are very *shallow* Spectators; but yet we see this Approbation of theirs accompanied with an *inveterate* Rancour and Enmity against him. And till our Wills are so *affected* by our Reason as to consent and *eccho* to its Approbations, to take Complacency in that *divine* Purity which our Reason acknowledges to be the Crown and Ornament of God; whilst we reverence him in our Minds, we hate and despise him in our Affections. So that he only is a Lover of God, whose Will is reconciled to *true* Goodness.

5thly. And lastly, This Love must be terminated on the *proper* Goodness and Perfections

fections of God ; and hereby I distinguish it from that Love which we too commonly terminate upon a God of *our own* making. For it is very ordinary with Men to set up *Idols* and *false* Representations of God in their Minds, and then fall down and worship them : And it is no *great* Wonder if they are extremely fond of these *Idol-Divinities* of their own making, since commonly they are nothing else but the Pictures and Images of themselves. *Thou thoughtst*, saith God to those profligate Persons, *that I was such a one as thy self*, Psa. l. 21. Men have always been prone to cast all their *Ideas* of God in the Mould of their *own* Tempers, and to fashion the *Divinity* whom they Worship, according to the Model of their *own* Inclinations. Thus Men of *ungovernable* and *imperious* Tempers are apt to represent God in their *own* Likeness, a Being that governs *himself* and *others* by a meer *blind omnipotent* Self-will, that wills Things merely because he wills them, and is no way concerned to regulate his *own* Motions by any *antecedent* Rules of Justice, Wisdom, or Goodness. So also Men of *wrathful* and *revengeful* Tempers are apt to look upon God as a *froward*, *furious*, and *implacable* Being, that is to be pleased or displeased with Trifles, that *frowns* or *smiles* as the
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Humour takes him; that when the *forward* Fit is upon him Breaths nothing but Revenge and Fury, and whose *Love* and *Hatred* is *fickle* and *mutable*, and never *constant* to the same Reasons. And to name no more, thus Men of *fond* and *indulgent* Natures are apt to represent *God* to themselves as one that dotes *invincibly* on those who have once the Luck to be his Favourites, and in *Christ*, at least will hug their very Deformities, and connive at their *greatest* Treasons and Rebellions. And since these *false* Representations that Men make of *God* are nothing but the Reflections of their *own* Images, in loving him they only love themselves; and 'tis no wonder that they are more devoutly affected towards such an *imaginary Divinity* than towards the *true God* himself clothed with his *own* Attributes, and circled about with his *own* Rays of *unstained* and *immaculate* Glory; since the *former* is nothing but their *own* Shadow, which *Narcissus-like* they gaze upon and fall in love with. But whatsoever Love we may bestow upon these *false* Representations it is not terminated upon *God*, but on the *Spectres* and Images of our Fancies, which have nothing of *God* about them but the Name. Wherefore to constitute our Love truly *divine*, it is *necessary* that it should

should respect *God* as he is in himself, and not as he seems to be in these *disfigured* Idols of our own Fancies. We must blot out of our Minds all these *false* Conceptions, which like the *Aethiopian Idols*, are nothing but *our own* Resemblance, and *portrait* him in all those *fair* Ideas wherein he hath represented himself unto us; and when we have righted him in *our own* Opinions, and formed such Notions of him as are *agreeable* to his *native* Perfections, then we must love him for what we see in him, even for the *Mercy* and *Goodness*, the *Righteousness* and *Purity* of his Nature. For unless we love these his *moral* Perfections, which are indeed the only Objects of Love in him, all our *kind* Pretences are *base* Flatteries, and in stead of him we only Love a *Mock-God* of *our own* making. And thus I have shewed you at large wherein the Essence of this *heavenly* Virtue, our Love of *God* consists. But because Things are better understood by their *essential* Characters and Properties than by their *naked* Essences, and we may much more easily discern whether we truly love *God* or no by the *former* than by the *latter*,

2. I proceed in the next Place to shew you what are the *essential* Properties and Characters of our Love of *God*: And these
are

are to be fetched from the Nature of Love in general, the Properties whereof when it is determined on a Person, are chiefly these four:

1. *Benevolence* to the Person beloved.
2. *Desire* of enjoying him.
3. *Imitation* of his Perfections.
4. *Conformity* to his Will.

1. Benevolence is an *essential* Property of our Love of *God*; by which I do not mean wishing of any *additional* Good or Happiness to *God* which yet he wants; for that is Extravagance, to wish that a Being who is infinitely *happy* should be more happy than he is; since his Happiness would not be *infinite* if it could admit of Addition or Increase. By our Benevolence to *God* therefore I only mean our *heartly* Desire that he may be pleased by *our selves* and *others*; that all his Creation may conspire to *serve* and *glorify* him in that Method which he hath prescribed; and that his Will may be done upon *Earth*, as it is in *Heaven*. And this must necessarily be the *heartly* Wish of every *sincere* Lover of *God*; and when he sees himself defeated of his Wish by the *wicked* Lives and Manners of Men; when he considers how *God* is offended every Day, how his Authority is *affronted*, his Laws *trampled* on, his Name *vilified* and *blasphemed* by bold
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and *insolent* Sinners, he cannot forbear grieving at it, to see *him* his Soul loves, loaded with so many Indignities and Dishonours. For thus did *David*, that great Lover of God ; *Rivers of tears run down mine Eyes, because Men keep not thy Law*, Psal. cxix. 136. So that what the brave *Portia* said to her dear *Brutus* *καίνορος ἐμὴν γὰρ δὲν, καίνορεστε ἀναιρόν*, that can every Lover of God say ; Lord ! *Thou knowest that I sympathize in all thy Pleasures and Displeasures ; when thou art pleased, I rejoice ; and when thou art offended, I am grieved.*

2ly. Another Property of divine Love is an earnest Desire of enjoying God. For so when we love a Friend, we desire to enjoy as much of him as we are able ; that is, we would fain be more *intimately* acquainted with him, we would love him more, and be more beloved by him, and resemble him in all those *amiable* Qualities for which we love and admire him. And thus if we have chosen *God* for our Friend, we shall still be breathing after a more *intimate* Fruition of him ; our Thoughts will be often employed in the Contemplation of his *Beauty* and *Glory* ; and our Minds will be perpetually longing after a *clearer* Knowledge of, and more *intimate* Acquaintance with him. We shall never think we love him sufficiently ; and never think we can do

do enough to *endear* our selves to his Favour; but shall always feel in our selves both Want of Love to him, and Want of Desert to be beloved by him. We shall incessantly covet more and more to *resemble* him in those *adorable* Perfections for which we love him; that so if it were possible, he might have the same Reason to love *us*, as we have to love *him*. We shall earnestly *hunger* and *thirst* after Righteousness, and vehemently wish that all those *amiable* Characters of *Purity* and *Justice*, *Mercy* and *Goodness*, for which we do admire and love him, were more fairly imprinted on *our own* Natures; that so by partaking of these Perfections, we may grow more and more *god-like*, till we are arrived to a most *perfect* Resemblance and Conformity of Natures with him. Thus to enjoy *God* must needs be the Desire of every *true* and *heartly* Lover of him. And indeed this is the only Enjoyment we are *capable* of; for we cannot enjoy *God's Essence*, because we cannot possess it, it being neither *communicated* nor *communicable*; and therefore all that our Enjoyment of him can include, is to *know* and *love*, and be *beloved* by him, and to resemble him in those *charming* Beauties of *Purity* and *Goodness* which render him so infinitely *lovely*; and it is *essential* to every
faithful

faithful Lover of him thus to desire to enjoy him.

3^{ly}. Imitation of his Perfections is another *essential* Property of Love to him: and *this* is necessarily *consequent* to the former; for if we love *God*, it is either for the *good* he doth us, or for the Beauty and Loveliness of his Nature. If we love him for the *good* he doth us, we must needs be *sensible* that it is a *lovely* Thing to do *good*, and this must strangely incline us to imitate him in doing all the *good* we are able. If we love him for the Beauty and Excellency of his Nature, we cannot but desire to be like him; because whatsoever we esteem lovely in *another*, we desire to partake of out of love to *our selves*; and if we desire to partake of what is lovely in *another*, that must needs engage us to imitate him, since we have no *other* Way to partake of anothers Excellencies but only by a *constant* Imitation of them. So that 'tis impossible we should love *God* for the Beauty and Perfection of his Nature, and not *heartily* desire to partake of it; and 'tis impossible we should *heartily* desire to partake of it, and not endeavour to transcribe it by a *constant* and *vigorous* Imitation. So that whatsoever *good* Reason we love *God* for, it must necessarily terminate in our Imitation of those *amiable* Actions or Perfections

fections for which we love him; and therefore any Man to pretend to love *God* while he acts contrary to the Reasons for which he loves him, is plainly to *contradict* himself, and *baffle* his own Pretensions. For to say that I love *God* for doing *good*, or for being *just*, *holy*, and *benevolent*, while I take no Care to do *good* my self, but take Pleasure in *Impurity*, *Injustice*, or *Uncharitableness*, is to say that I love him for those Things which I plainly declare I do not love. If therefore we heartily love *God* as we pretend to do, it will be *visible* in our Imitation of him; for unless we endeavour to be *pure* as he is *pure*, and *holy* as he is *holy*, and *just* and *merciful* as he is *just* and *merciful*; all our Pretensions of Love to him are Cheats and *fulsom* Hypocrisy.

4thly, and lastly. Compliance with the Will of *God* is another *essential* Character and Property of our Love to him. For if we sincerely love a Person, we must needs desire to *please* him, that so thereby we may *endear* our selves to him; and if we really desire to *please* him, to be sure we shall readily comply with his Will in whatsoever is *just* and *reasonable*. And hence the *Scripture* makes our Obedience to the Will of *God* *essential* to our Love of him; For this, saith St. John, is the love of *God*, that

we keep his Commandments, 1 Joh. v. 3. and this is love, that we walk after his Commandments, 2 Epist. vi. If ye love me, saith our Saviour, keep my Commandments, Joh. xiv. 15. that is, give me this Token that ye love me; for without this I can never believe that you have any *real* Kindness for me whatsoever Pretensions you may make; for so Vers. 23. he adds *If any Man love me, he will keep my Commandments*, intimating that between our Love of, and Obedience to him, there is a *necessary and inseparable* Connection. So that we may as soon be Men without *Risibility*, as Lovers of God without *sincere* Submission to his Will. For Lovers have *one* Will and *one* Soul ; they conspire in the *same* Designs, and drive at the *same* Interests; their Affections are *perfect Unizons*, and do in the *same Likes* and *Dislikes* rebound and *eccho* to *one another* ; and so far as they love, there is such a *perfect* Agreement between them that they seem mutually to *lend* and *borrow* Wills and Souls with *one another*. And so if we love God, there will be a *sweet* Harmony between *our* Wills and *his*, at least so far as we love him; for if we love him, we shall love to *please* him, by complying in all Things with his *heavenly* Will, and rejoyce that we are able to do any thing that we are sure will be *acceptable*

ceptable in his Eyes, and certainly *endear* us to his most *tender* Affection. Whilst therefore we live in *wilful* Disobedience and Opposition to his *heavenly* Will, all our Pretences of Love to him are *rank* Dissimulations, and like the Kisses of *Judas* are only Prefaces to our *succeeding* Treasons and Rebellions. And thus you see wherein the *Essence* of our Love to God consists, and what are its *essential* Properties; by a *serious* Review of which you may easily conclude whether in reality you are Lovers of God or no.

2. I now proceed to the next Enquiry, namely what Measures and Degrees of *this* Love are Matter of *indispensable* Duty to us. For answer to which we must consider, that *this* as well as all the *other* Virtues of *Christianity* are required of us by a *twofold* Law; the *first* is the Law of *Perfection*, the *second* is the Law of *Sincerity*; both of which it will be necessary for us to explain before we can exactly determine what Degrees and Measures of Love to God are Matter of *indispensable* Duty.

1. First therefore there is the Law of *Perfection*, which requires the *utmost* Degrees of every *Christian* Virtue that in the *several* States and Periods of our Lives we are capable of attaining. For thus we are en-

joyned, not only *to do*, but *to abound in the work of the Lord*; not only *to have Grace*, but *to grow in it*; *to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, and *be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect*. And indeed the Nature of God is the only Standard of *that* Perfection whereunto we must aspire, and we are still bound to be growing on till we are infinitely *holy*; which, because our *finite* Natures can never arrive to in any Period of Duration, therefore I doubt not but it will be our Duty to be growing on *eternally*. So that this Law having prescribed no Limits to the Degrees of our *Growth* in Virtue, hath thereby cut out work enough to employ our Faculties *for ever*. Not that we are Sinners against this Law so long as we are *short* or *defective* of the *utmost* Degree of Perfection; for it requires of us no more than what is within our *present* Possibility, and our Possibility encreases together with our Improvements. When we have but *one* Degree of Virtue, it is no Sin against the Law of *Perfection* that we do not immediately leap to *six* or *seven*; because it is not in our Power, and no Law can oblige a Man to that which is *impossible*; but when we have acquired *one* Degree we have Power to acquire a *second*, and when we have acquired *that*, we have Power to acquire

quire a *third*; and so on *ad infinitum*; and consequently our Obligation to be more and more *perfect*, increaseth according to the Improvement of our Power. A *Babe in Christ*, or *Beginner in Religion* hath not the Strength and Power of a Man, that is, of one that hath made a *considerable* Progress; and consequently he is not immediately obliged by *this* Law to the same Degree of Growth and Perfection; but whatsoever Degree is within his Power in the *different* Periods of his Growth and Progress, that he is actually and immediately obliged to, and while he continues *defective* in it he sins against the Law of Perfection. So that in short, *this* Law requires us to be in all Respects as *good* in the several Stages of our *Christian* Progress as at present 'tis possible for us to be; and so far as we fall *short* of any Attainment that is within our Power, we are guilty of *violating* its *righteous* Obligation. 'Tis true, *this* Law doth not oblige us under the Pain of *eternal* Damnation; and indeed if it did, no Flesh could be saved, since there never was any *mere* Man but might have possibly been *better* than he was, had he been so *diligent* as to improve himself to the *utmost* Degree of his Power. The *proper* Sanction therefore of *this* Law is this, that we should actually do

all the *good*, and acquire all the Degrees of *Virtue* that are at *present* within our Power, under the Pain of losing some Degree of Happiness in the *other* World, which otherwise we should have attained ; which is no more than what naturally follows upon all *sinful* Defects. For every *sinful* Defect is a Privation of some Degree of Goodness, and Goodness is so *essential* to Happiness, that there cannot be a Privation of the *one* without a Diminution of the *other*. But besides those Defects of Happiness that are naturally *consequent* to our Defects of *Virtue*, the *Scripture* plainly assures us that God himself will subtract from our Reward *hereafter* in Proportion to our *moral* Defects and Nonimprovements in *this* Life ; for *he which soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly : And he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully*, 2 Cor. ix. 6. And Luke xix. our *Saviour* by way of a *Parable* doth expressly teach us, that our Reward shall be *apportioned* to the Degrees of our Improvement ; for there he represents himself as a *Master* coming to take Account of his *Servants*, among whom he had intrusted a Stock of *Ten Pounds*, giving every one of them an *equal* Share ; the *first* by an *extraordinary* Diligence had improved his *Pound* into *Ten*, and he is rewarded accordingly

dingly with the Government of *ten Cities*,
 Verſ. 16, 17. The *other* had been *faithful*,
 though not altogether ſo *diligent*, and by
 his *one Pound* had gained *five*, and propor-
 tionably is made Lord of *five Cities*, Verſ. 18,
 19. By which he plainly declares that ſo
 much as we come ſhort of the *utmoſt* Im-
 provement in Virtue, ſo much will he
 ſubſtract from the *utmoſt* Degree of our Re-
 ward. So that in ſhort the Senſe of the
 Law of *Perfection* is this, as thou wouldſt
 not incur the Forfeiture of ſome Degrees of
 thy Happineſs in the *other* Life, be ſure to
 imploy thy *utmoſt* Diligence in improv'g
 thy ſelf in every *Grace* and *Virtue* of Religi-
 on. But then

2ly. There is the Law of *Sincerity*, which
 only requires the Being and Reality of all
Chriſtian Graces and Virtues in us, toge-
 ther with the *proper* Acts and Exerciſes of
 them according as we have Opportunity,
 and doth no farther forbid the Deficiency
 and Non-improvement of them than as it
 is *groſs* and *continued* and *iinſiſtent* with
 Sincerity. Now the Reality of theſe *Chri-
 ſtian* Virtues in us conſiſts in the *univerſal*
 and *prevaleant* Conſent of our Wills to them,
 to practiſe them as often as Occaſion re-
 quires, and not wilfully to commit any
contrary Sin upon any Occaſion whatſoe-

ver; and so long as this Consent *continues* and *prevails* in our Practice, we are *just* in the Eye and Judgment of the Law, whatsoever *Weakness* and *Defects*, *Surprizes* and *Inadvertencies* we may otherwise be guilty of. For he who hath so submitted his Will to God as to consent effectually without any Reserve to obey him, is evidently *cordial* and *sincere*, though perhaps he may be *weak* and *imperfect*. For as he is sincerely *chast*, whose Will doth prevalently Consent to the Law of *Chastity*; so he is universally a *vertuous* Man, whose Will doth prevalently Consent to the *universal* Law of Virtue; because that very Consent of his includes the Being and Reality of all Virtues, though not the *utmost* Degrees and Improvements of them. This therefore is the *utmost* that the Law of *Sincerity* requires, that we should *universally* and *prevalently* Consent to the Will of God so as not *wilfully* to neglect any Duty which he hath enjoyned, and practise any Sin which he hath forbid; but though this be all it requires, yet this it exacts under the *severest* Penalty in the World, even that of *eternal* Death and Condemnation; only this *Proviso* it admits of, that if we do repent and amend, this *dreadful* Obligation shall be *null* and *void*. So that the *great* Difference
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between the Law of *Perfection* and the Law of *Sincerity* is only this, that the Penalty of the *later* is much more *Severe* than that of the *former*; but the Duty of the *former* is much more *large* and *comprehensive* than that of the *later*.

Having thus briefly explained to you these *two Different Laws* by which the Love of God as well as all *other Virtues* are made our Duty, this I conceive will be of very *great Use* in stating the *due Bounds* and *Measures* either of Love or any *other Virtue* God requires of us: We must understand by what Laws it is that he requires it, and what Measures of it those Laws do require. *First* therefore, we will consider what Degree of Love to God is required by the Law of *Perfection*. *Secondly*, what Degree of it is required by the Law of *Sincerity*.

1st. What Degree of Love to God is required by the Law of *Perfection*? To which I answer, that it requires all that Love which in the *several Periods* of our Growth and Progress in *Religion* we are able to render him. For it is to be considered that in this *corrupt Estate*, both our *Understandings* and *Wills* are so *darkened* and *depraved*, that we do not apprehend the *thousandth Part* of those Degrees of Loveliness that are in him,
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and if we did, yet our Affections are so inveigled by these *sensual* Goods among which we are placed, that we are not able to render him the *thousandth* Part of that Love, which those Degrees of Loveliness we do apprehend in him do deserve. But there is no *just* Law can exact of us beyond what we are *able* to perform ; and therefore this Law of *Perfection* being *just* and *righteous*, cannot be supposed to exact *more* Love to *God* from us than we have Strength and Power (all our Circumstances considered) to render unto him. So that he who doth his utmost to understand, and affect himself with the Beauty and Loveliness of *God*, and to substract his Love from *sensual* Good, and *terminate* it on *God*, is a *just* and *innocent* Man in the Judgment of the Law of *Perfection*. From whence it is evident *first*, that no Man can be bound by any Law to Love *God* as much as he deserves to be beloved ; because he being infinitely *lovely* in himself is the *adequate* Object of an *infinite* Love, which no *finite* Being is *capable* of. *2ly*. That no Man is bound to understand how much he deserves to be beloved, because *this* is beyond the Comprehension of any *finite* Understanding, especially of ours which are so *dim-sighted* in their Apprehensions of *spiritual*

ritual and *invisible* Beings. 3^{ly}. That in this State no Man is bound *actually* to love God so far as he apprehends Reason to love him; this indeed we ought to endeavour after, but while we continue in these *Bodies* it is impossible for us so *absolutely* to abstract our Love from *sense* and *sensual* Things, as not to be in the least diverted by it from loving him to that Degree in which we know he deserves to be beloved. It is, I confess, our Imperfection that our Love to him is not *proportionate* to our Apprehensions of his Loveliness: but besides this we have many *other* Imperfections that are our Misery indeed, but not our Sin. For no Imperfection is any farther our Sin than 'tis in our Power to correct it; and there is no *true* Lover of God did ever attain to that Degree of Love as not to see *great* Reason to wish that it were in his Power still to love him more; which is a *plain* Evidence in every Period of this *imperfect* State that our Affections are so intangled by these *sensible* Goods about us, that we are not able to raise them to such a Degree of Love as is *proportionate* to our Apprehensions of his Loveliness. 4^{ly} and lastly, That no Man is bound to love God in the *several* Periods of his Growth and Progress in *Religion* with the same Degree

gree of Affection ; for by the Law of *Perfection* a Man is always bound to love him as *much* as he can, but in the *Progress* of our *Religion* we can love him much *more* than in the *Beginning*. For the *more* we know of God, and the *more* our Affections are disingaged from these *sensual* Goods, the *more* Power and Ability we have to love him; and we are equally bound to love him as much as we can, when we have *ten* Degrees of Power, as we are when we have but *one*; and consequently 'tis as *great* an Offence against the Law of *Perfection* not to love him as much as we can when we have *more* Power to love him, as it was when we had *less*. So that by this Law we are always bound to love him as much as we are able, and to be always *augmenting* our Ability of loving him, and always to love him *more* and *more* as our Power and Ability increases; and under this *sweet* Obligation perhaps we shall lie to all *Eternity*. For there being *infinite* Degrees of Loveliness and Amability in God, our *finite* Understandings will need an *Infinity* of Duration to discover them all, and it would be *unreasonable* for us not to love him *more*, according as we discover *more* of the Beauty and Loveliness of his Nature. 'Tis true, in *this* Life the
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Difficulty lies not so much in discovering his Loveliness, as in affecting our Hearts with the Sense of it, and in raising our *gross* and *carnal* Affections to a Love *proportionate* to those Discoveries; and 'tis this that creates us so much Toil and Labour in the Progress of our Obedience to the Law of *Perfection*; but when once we are arrived into the *blessed* Regions of *Immortality* our Affection being perfectly subdued to the Reason of our Minds, and *dreined* and *clarified* from all its *gross* and *carnal* Love will as naturally flame out *more* and *more* towards God upon every *new* Discovery of his Beauty, as Fire doth when more *combustible* Fuel is layd upon it; and so without any Toil or Difficulty, the *more* we *know* the *more* we shall *Love*, and so *more* and *more* *for ever*. If therefore we would know what Measures of Love to God we are obliged to by this Law of *Perfection*, the Answer is *easy*, viz. that to all *Eternity* we are bound to love him as much as we are able, and always to love him *more* and *more* as our Ability increases. And this I take to be the Sense of that *comprehensive* Law of our Saviour, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,* Mar. 12. 30. that is, thou shalt employ thy
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Faculties, thy *Mind*, thy *Will*, and thy *Affections* to the *utmost* of thy Strength and Power in *loving*, *delighting*, and *taking Complacency* in the Goodness, Beauty, and Perfections of God. But

2ly. What Degree of Love to God is required by the Law of *Sincerity*, which is the Law by which we must stand or fall for ever ? So that the Sense of the Enquiry is this, what Degree of Love to God is *necessary* to put us into a State of *Salvation*, the *indispensable* Condition of our Salvation being nothing else but our Obedience to this Law of *Sincerity*. Now as to this *particular* of our Love of God there are *two* Things which this Law exacts of us ; *First*, it requires the *Being* and *Existence* of this *heavenly* Virtue in us, that is, it requires not only that we should not hate God, or be *indifferent* between Love and Hatred in our Affection to him, but that we should *really*, *cordially*, and *sincerely* love him. And hence those *eternal* Glories and Beatitudes in which our Salvation doth consist, are said to be *prepared by God for them that love him*, 1 Cor. 2. 9. which is a *plain* Evidence that it is one of the Conditions or Qualifications upon which our Salvation doth depend, and consequently an *indispensable* Duty of the Law of *Sincerity*; and St. James expressly tells

tells us, *that the Lord hath promised the Crown of Life to them that love him, Ja. 1. 12.* And therefore since that Law of *Sincerity* contains the Condition of *that* Promise, it hence necessarily follows, that our Love to God is a Part of it, since that Promise is made to those that love him. Nay, so necessary a Part of *that* Law is this excellent Virtue, that the *Apostle* tells us, without this the most *vertuous* Actions whatsoever are insignificant Cyphers in the Account of God; for *though*, saith he, *I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my Body to be Burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing, 1 Cor. 13. 3.* where it is plain he takes Charity in the largest Sense for our Love to God and one another. He therefore that doth not really love God, who is not heartily touched and affected with the Sense of his Goodness and Perfections stands condemned by the Law of *Sincerity*; and without Repentance and Amendment shall have no Part or Portion in the *Kingdom of God*. But then

Secondly, This Law of *Sincerity* requires such a Degree of Love to God, as doth, together with the *other* Motives of *Christianity*, effectually render us obedient to his Will. For, as I have shewed you, the *Scripture* every where makes our keeping his Command-

mandments the most *essential* Property of our Love of him ; for *if a man love me, saith our Saviour, he will keep my Words*, Joh. 14. 23. And *whofo keepeth his Word*, saith St. John, that is, his Commandments, *in him is the love of God perfected* ; that is, in him it is *real, and cordial, and sincere*, 1 Joh. 2. 5. When therefore our Love to God hath that Power over us, as together with the *other* Motives of *Christianity*, to restrain us from the *wilful* Omission of any *known* Duty, or Commission of any *known* Sin, it is then perfected to that Degree which the Law of *Sincerity* exacts. But before we dismiss this Argument, it will be *necessary* to give a more *particular* Account of it.

I. Therefore, this Law of *Sincerity* requires that some Degree of *true* Love to God should be intermingled with the *other* Parts of our Obedience to him ; because this, as I have shewn you, is one *great and essential* Part of that Obedience which it requires ; and therefore if out of *mere* Fear of God we should obey him in all *other* Instances, yet so long as we are defective in *this*, our Obedience will be *lame and partial*, and want a *great* Part of that Intireness which the Law of *Sincerity* exacts. For since it requires us to love God under the *same* Penalty of *eternal* Death that it requires all its *other*

ther Duties, we can no more be saved by it without this *Virtue* than without *Justice*, *Temperance* and *Chastity*; yea, considering how *necessary* this is both to quicken our Obedience *here*, and qualify us for Happiness *hereafter*, we may much better spare any *Virtue* of *Religion* than this of the Love of *God*. This therefore is *indispensably necessary*, according to the Tenor of the Law of *Sincerity*, that there should be some Degree of *true* Love to *God* intermingled with the *other* Parts of our Obedience.

2ly. This Law of *Sincerity* exacts of us only such a Degree of Love to *God* as, in Conjunction with the *other* Motives of *Christianity*, is actually *sufficient* to enforce our Obedience. It doth not require us to love *God* in that *heroic* Degree, as not to need any *other* Motive to engage us to obey his Will; for if it did, no Man could be in a *good* State till he were able to obey *God* purely for his *own* Sake, without any Respect either to those *glorious* Advantages he promises, or those *endless* Torments he denounces; which requires such an *ardent* Degree of Love to him as I doubt few *good* Men arrive to in this Life. I know 'tis usually said by those that handle this Argument, that to love *God* above all Things is the Degree of Love to which the Law of

Sincerity obliges us; but either this must be a Mistake, or no Man can be *good* till he is so *perfect* a Lover of *God* as not to need any *other* Motive but that of *his own* Love to oblige him to Obedience. For Men need no Motives to persuade them to chuse what they love *best*; and therefore if Men loved *God* above all, they would need no farther Motives to persuade them to chuse what he Wills and Commands against all Persuasions to the contrary. If I love *God* above my self, I shall certainly chuse *his* Will before my *own*: If I love him above all my Pleasures, I shall chuse *his* Pleasures before my *own*; and it will be a *needleless* Thing to propose Motives to persuade me to do that which I like best, and chuse that which I love above all the World. So that whilst a Man hath Need of Motives to persuade him to chuse *God*, and prefer his Will above all Temptations, it is apparent he loves him not above all; and consequently according to this *Doctrine* cannot be a *good* Man in the Judgment of the Law of *Sincerity*; which if it were *true*, I doubt, the List of *good* Men would be reduced to a very *small* Number. Wherefore since loving *God* above all is a *high* strain of Piety much above the *low* Estate of *sincere* and *true* Goodness, to make it necessary to a
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good State must needs be very *dangerous*, since it cannot but dishearten *beginners in Religion*, and perplex their Consciences with *needless* and *inextricable* Scruples. I confess, not to love God above all, who doth so infinitely exceed all in Degrees of Loveliness and Amability, is an Argument of *great* Imperfection, though not of Insincerity; but if my Love to him be such, as that together with my *Hope* and *Fear* excited by the *other* Motives of *Religion*, it effectually operates on my Will, so as to win it to an *universal prevalent* Consent to the Will of God, I know no Reason I have to judge severely of my *main* State, though I should be *conscious* to my self that my Love *singly* and *apart* from those *other* Motives had not Force enough in it to produce this *happy* Effect. This therefore I conceive is the *utmost* Degree of Love to God that the Law of *Sincerity* exacts, that we should *so* love him as by our Love, in Concurrence with the *other* Arguments of *Religion*, to be effectually prevailed on to obey him.

3ly. The Law of *Sincerity* exacts such a Degree of Love of us, as together with those *other* Motives of *Christianity* is prevalent to *sincere* Obedience; and in this it differs from the Law of *Perfection*, which re-

quires such a *Degree* of Love of us, as together with those *other* Motives is productive of *perfect unfinning* Obedience. For, as I have shewed you, the Law of *Perfection* requires the *utmost* of our Possibility, and consequently that we should love God as much as we can, and consider and apply to our selves the *other* Motives of *Religion* as well and as closely as we are able, and then proceed upon the whole to serve and obey God to the *utmost* of our Power and Ability; which if we do, we are perfectly *innocent* and *inculpable*; unless you suppose, that a Man may be *blame-worthy* for not doing more than he can. But should the Law of *Sincerity* exact thus much of us, I doubt it would exclude the *best* of Men out of the State of Goodness and Salvation; for what Man is there that doth always love and obey God to the *utmost* of his *present* Possibility? Wherefore all that this Law can be supposed to require of us, is only such a Degree of Love as is requisite to render it a *concurrent* Cause of *true sincere* Obedience, that is to say, such a Love as in Concurrency with those *great* Motives of Reward and Punishment produces such an *heartly* Consent in us to the Will of God as will not suffer us any longer to persist either in *careless* or *affected* Ignorance of it, or in *known* and

and *wilful* Disobedience to it; and there are no Infirmities or Miscarriages whatsoever *inconsistent* with such a Degree of Love to God; but what are also *inconsistent* with such a Consent to his *heavenly* Will. If therefore we thus love God to the Purposes of a *sincere* Obedience, the Law of *Sincerity* acquits us; and as for our Sins of *Infirmity*, *Surprize*, or *Inadvertency*, we are *accountable* for them only to the Law of *Perfection*.

4thly, And lastly, The Law of *Sincerity* requires such a Degree of Love to God as together with those *other* Motives makes us not only *sincere* in our Obedience, but also *careful* to improve it to further Degrees of Perfection. And indeed *this* is necessarily included in the *former*; for if our Love of God joyned with the *other* Arguments of *Religion* hath so far prevailed upon us as to win us to a *sincere* Consent to his *heavenly* Will, we shall not only industriously avoid the *known* and *wilful* Violations of it, but be very careful to correct those Flaws and Imperfections that are intermixed with our Obedience to it. 'Tis true, when there is nothing but *slavish* Fear at the Bottom of a Mans Obedience, *that* must necessarily *contract* and *shrink* up the Sinews of his Care and Endeavours, and render him exceeding *narrow* and *stingy* in the Discharge of his

his Duty ; for having no farther Aim than *his own* Security, he will do no more than what is *necessary* to avoid the Danger that he stands in Fear of ; and if he can but escape those *known* and *wilful* Sins that layd waste his Conscience, and expos'd him to the Wrath of God, that is the *utmost* he desires or aims at ; but as for those Miscarriages and *sinful* Imperfections which do only fall under the Cognizance of the Law of *Perfection*, he is not at all concerned about them. But when our *Fear* is intermingled with such a Degree of *Love* to God as the Law of *Sincerity* exacts, that will make us *careful*, not only to avoid those *known* and *willful* Sins that divorce us from the Favour of God, but also to indear our selves *more* and *more* to him by correcting even those *smaller* Defects and Imperfections that do still adhere to our Duties and Natures : For this is plain, that no Man can heartily love God that doth not *more* and *more* desire to be beloved by him ; and that no Man can sincerely desire to be *more* and *more* beloved by God, that doth not honestly endeavour to render himself *more* and *more* lovely in his Eyes ; that is, to reform all those *sinful* Defects and Imperfections which *stain* and *blemish* the Beauty of his Soul. Whosoever therefore contents himself with this, not to be hated

hated by God, did never sincerely love him; and whosoever desires *more* than this, will as well be *careful* to correct those *smaller* Imperfections which render him less beloved of God, as to avoid those *known* and *wilful* Sins which do expose him to God's Hatred. If therefore our *Religion* doth not in some Measure improve our Natures, if it doth not render us more *patient* and *humble*, more *charitable* and *heavenly minded*, it is a *certain* Sign that it is not acted by Love. For if after having a long while continued in a Round of *religious* Duties we still return to the same Point, and are in no Degree *better* than we were when we *first* began, it is a *plain* Token that we do not heartily desire to be more beloved of God, and consequently that we do not love him. So that in fine the Sum of all is this, The Law of *Perfection* requires us to love God with all our Might and with all our Strength, that is, as much as we are able in every Period of our *Growth* and *Progress* in *Religion*; and by how much we love him *less* than we are able, by so much *less* shall be the *future* Reward of our Love. But then for the Law of *Sincerity*, that only requires of us such a Degree of Love to him as doth together with the *other* Motives of *Religion* effectually incline us to obey him sincerely, and

to endeavour to improve our Obedience into farther Degrees of Perfection ; and so long as we fall short of this we are *bad* Men, and the Wrath of God abides upon us. And so I have done with the First Part of the Text, We *should* or *ought* to love God.

2. I proceed now to the *second* Part, *viz.* the Reason why we ought to love him ; and that is, because *he first loved us* ; which though it be but *short* in Words, yet is extremely *comprehensive* in Sense, containing in it such *puissant* Motives and *endearing* Obligations as cannot but affect us if we have any Spark of *Tendernefs* or *Ingenuity* remaining in us. For in this Argument or Reason these six Things are implied ;

1. That he *began* in Love to us.
2. That he *began* before we could any Way deserve it.
3. That he *began to love us* when we deserved his *Hatred*.
4. That he *began* when he foresaw he could never make any Advantage by it.
5. He *began to love us* to such a Degree as to think nothing *too dear* or *too good* for us.
6. That he so *began* to love us as to condescend by all the Arts of Importunity to *court* us to accept his Love : All which are very *powerful* Considerations to engage us to return him *Love* for *Love*.

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1. He *began* in Love to us. Had he only engaged himself to *re-love* us whensoever we began to love him, and in the mean Time remained *indifferent* in his Affection towards us, this would have been a *mighty endearing* Obligation. For the *great Majesty* of *Heaven* to take Notice of the Loves of such *poor* Worms as we, and much more to engage himself to repay them with a *correspondent* Affection, is in it self a *noble* Expression of his *great* and *generous* Goodness; but that he should not only take Notice of, and return our Love, but *forestal* and *anticipate* it; that he should condescend to make the *first* Address and Tender of Love to us, is such an Expression of Goodness as is sufficient to inflame the most *stupid* and *insensible* Soul. For he that loves *another* lays an Obligation upon him, and renders him extremely beholding; he lends him his Heart and Soul which are much more *valuable* than Money, and he becomes his Creditor and acquires a *just* Claim to be repaid with *mutual* Affection: For not to repay Love for Love, is equally *unjust* and *ungrateful*. He therefore that begins to love, doth thereby render the Person *beloved* his Debtor, and acquires a *just* Right to be Beloved by him again, though he should have no *other* Pretence to, or Interest in his
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Affections, especially if he be one who is much our *Superiour* in all *endearing* Perfections and Accomplishments; because this must needs render his Love more *valuable*, and consequently *augment* our Obligation to re-love him. When therefore the *great God* himself shall begin to love us, who doth so infinitely *excel* us in all Manner of *amiable* Perfections, how deeply are we obliged and beholding to him? What *infinite* Sums of Love must we owe him? If he had laid no *other* Obligation upon us, had neither *made*, nor *fed*, nor *clothed*, nor *provided* for us; if he had no *other* Claim to our Love but only this, that he *first* loved us; yet this is such as we cannot frustrate without being extremely *unjust* and *ungrateful*. For he is so much afore-hand in Kindness with us, hath so much gotten the start of us in Love, that we shall never be able to *overtake* him. He loved us long before we had a Being, when we existed only in *his own* Decree to make us Men, and to provide for our Happiness; so that now we are so far behind-hand in *Arrears* of Love to him, that we shall need, as well as have an *Eternity* to discharge them; and should we from henceforth every Moment love him *more and more* to the *longest imaginary* Period of Duration, yet we shall still owe him all that *Eternity* of
Love

Love that was due before we began to love him. And shall we grudge to pay him a *Mite* to whom we are indebted *Millions*? And is it not *high* Time for us to begin to love him *now*, who hath loved us so long already for nothing without the *least* Shadow of Requitall?

2ly. He *began* to love us before we could any ways deserve it. For it is *impossible* for a Creature that owes all to God, the Fountain of its Being, to deserve any Thing at his Hands; because he hath every Thing from him, and so can render him nothing but what is *his own* already by an *unalienable* Propriety. But the *noblest* and most *acceptable* Sacrifice that we are able to render unto God is our *heartly* and *unfeigned* Love; and if it were possible for us any way to deserve his Love, who is so much *above* us, and hath such an *absolute* Dominion over us, it would doubtless be Offering up our Souls to him *inflamed* with Love and Affection; for tis this alone that *consecrates* all our Services, and renders them *valuable* in the Eyes of God. If Love, like an *universal* Soul, be not diffused throughout all our *Religion*, and doth not *act* and *animate* every Part of it, in God's Account all our *demure* Pretences are nothing but the *lifeless* Puppits and Images of *true Religion*; which

which though they may *ſpeak* and *move* and *aſt* like that which they repreſent and imitate, yet want that *inward* Form and Principle that gives it Life and Motion; and to have nothing of *Religion* but merely the *Shape* and *Outſide*, is as *bad*, at leaſt in God's Account, as to have none at all. Since therefore 'tis Love that gives Worth and Value to all our *other* Services, and renders them *acceptable* to God; it hence neceſſarily follows, that it ſelf is the moſt *grateful* Thing we can render to him, and that when *this* is wanting, we are ſo far from being *capable* of deſerving his Love, that nothing we do can be *pleaſing* or *acceptable* in his Eyes. Wherefore ſince he loved us before we loved him, it is plain that it was not our Deſert, but *his own* Goodneſs that firſt *endeared* him to us; for when we did not love him, we could have neither *Form* nor *Comlineſs* to attract his Love; our Love to him being the only Beauty that can render us *amiable* in his Eyes: So that he could have no *other* Motive to incline him to love us, but only the *immense* Benevolence of his own Nature. Since therefore he hath loved me without any Deſert of mine, can I forbear to love him who hath deſerved ſo *well* of me? If he had never expreſſed any Kindneſs towards me, yet I have *infinite* Reason to love him,

him, because of the *infinite* Loveliness of his Nature ; but when I add to this the *unspeakable* Love he bore me when I had neither Beauty to *endear*, nor Desert to *oblige* him ; what a *tender* Care he took of my Welfare, and how *big* his Thoughts were with Designs of Kindness to me ; I am not able to reflect upon my Coldness and Indifference towards him without the *greatest* Shame and Confusion ; especially considering,

3ly. That he *began* to love us when we deserved his *Hatred*. And indeed if we consider the *wretched* Condition in which his Love found us when it first *addressed* to us, and cast its *gracious* Eyes upon us ; we shall find *sufficient* Reason to wonder that it did not immediately convert into *implacable* Fury. For when it first looked down on us from the *Battlements* of *Heaven*, it beheld us *wallowing* in our Blood, all *polluted* and *distained* with the *foulest* Treasons and Rebellions. It saw us unanimously engaged in an *unnatural* Conspiracy against the *blesed* Author of our Beings, converting those very Faculties he bestowed upon us into *Weapons* of Rebellion against him, and arming the Effects of his Bounty against his *Sovereign* Authority. It beheld our Natures all *depraved* and *vitiated*, our Faculties all
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disordered and confused, our Minds *surround- ed with Egyptian Darknefs*, our Wills *byass'd with wild and irregular Inclinations*, our Affections *overgrown with monstrous and preternatural Lusts*, and all the *beautiful Structure of our Natures* most miserably *disfigured and deformed*; and certainly one would have thought that such a *loathsome Spectacle* as this might have been *sufficient to extinguish his Love for ever*, and stifle all his *tender Resentments* towards us. But so *invincible* was his Kindness to us, that all the Deformities we had *superinduced* upon our Natures, all our Unworthiness to be *be- loved* by him, all the *rude Affronts and In- dignities* we had offered, were not able so much as for *one Moment* to stop or divert the *impetuous Current* of his Goodness. But in the midst of so many Reasons that he had to *hate* us, he fixed his Love upon us; and notwithstanding the Continuance of those Reasons doth still persist to love us; and while we are *abusing* of his Kindness, *dis- honouring* his Name, and *trampling* on his Laws and Authority, he is continually *mindful* and *active* to do us good, and doth incessantly imploy his *restless Thoughts*, extend his *watchful Eye*, and exert his *power- ful Arm* to contrive, promote and procure our Happiness; as if he were resolved to be

as *obstinate* in Love, as we are in Unkindness, to contend with us for Victory, and, if it be possible, to vanquish us with the Charms of an *invincible* Kindness. And now methinks it should be impossible for any one that hath but the Reason of a Man to be so *base* and *disingenuous*, as not to be endeared by such a *victorious* Love. *Oblest* God! dost thou love me who have so many ways deserved thy *Hatred*, and can I hate thee who hast so infinitely *merited* my Love? Have I not been *long* enough thine Enemy already, and hast thou not been *long* enough my Friend at last to thaw my *obdurate* Enmity, and melt me into a *reciprocal* Kindness? *Barbarous Heart!* Canst thou still withstand these *puissant* Endearments of *Almighty* Love, that hath so long repay'd thee *Smiles* for *Affronts*, and returned thee *Favours* for *Provocations*? For shame, if thou hast any Sense of Gratitude or Modesty in thee, be at last persuaded to hearken to the Love of thy *Maker*, and to return him *Love* for *Love*.

4thly. He began to love us when he could never reap the *least* Advantage to himself by it. Had we been *capable* either of *benefiting* or *injuring* him, of *adding* to, or *subtracting* from his Happiness, his *own* Interest might have obliged him to love us, or
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at least to have pretended Kindness to us, that so he might the better obtain his Ends upon us, and engage us to contribute more *freely* to his Happiness. But such a *poor* Design, as this, is *inconsistent* with the Notion of a *Divinity*, which implies *infinite* Perfection, and consequently *infinite* Happiness; and for him who is infinitely *happy*, to design a Contribution of Happiness from his Creatures, implies a Contradiction; because the very designing of a *farther* Happiness implies a *present* Want and Insufficiency, which can have no Place in a Being that is infinitely *happy* already. The Happiness of *God* therefore being so *immense* and *secure* that nothing can be added to, or subtracted from it, it is impossible he should love us, for any *Self-interest* or Advantage, it being out of the Reach of any Power whatsoever, either to *benefit* or *injure* him; and his Love to us can have no *other* Design but only our Happiness and Welfare. He his infinitely *perfect* and *happy* in himself, and consequently cannot be supposed to love us for *his own* Advantage, it being impossible that he who is infinitely *happy* in himself should be *capable* of receiving any Advantage from any Thing *without* him; so that there can be no *other* End of his Love, but only to render us *like himself*
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completely *perfect* and *happy*. For when he *first* set his Heart upon us, and chose us for his Favourites, he knew his *own* Happiness to be so *immense* and *stable*, as that he could never need our Love or Services, either to add more to it, or to *continue* and *perpetuate* it, which from *Eternity* to *Eternity* was, and is, and always will be *commensurate* to the *boundless* Capacity of his Nature. But such was his *innate* Goodness and Beneficence as would not permit him to be *happy* alone, to content himself in a *solitary* Fruition of his own *essential* Beatitudes; but to gratify the *benign* Inclinations of his Nature he must have Companions in Happiness, upon whom he may diffuse his Goodness, and imprint his own Bliss and Perfection: And 'twas only this *frank* and *generous* Motive that first obliged him to cast an Eye of Love towards us. When we had neither *Worth* to *deserve*, nor *Power* to *requite* his Kindness, then did his *own* Benignity incline his Heart to love us, and to invite and receive us into a Participation of his Happiness. He knew well enough that the most we were *capable* to do for him was only to *love* and *obey*, to *praise* and *honour* and *adore* him; and that when we had done all this, it would be impossible for him to reap the least Advantage by it;

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that if we did *love* and *obey* him, the Profit would all redound to our selves, and that if we did not, our selves only would fare the *worse* for it; so that whether we did or no, it would be all one to him; his Happiness would be still the same, without the *least* Addition or Substraction. And yet when Things were in this Posture, when he had no *Self-interest* to serve upon us, no Motive but his *own* Benignity to *endear* him to us, then did he *begin* to love us, and to expresse the Earnings of his Heart and Bowels towards us. And now how can we think of this, and not be affected with it? How can we any longer avoid being *captivated* with the Thoughts of such a *generous* Kindness? Consider, *O my Soul*, thy God gains nothing by all his Love to thee, but thou gainest *infinitely* by thy Love to him; by loving him thou *glorifiest* thy self, and *crownest* thy *own* Desires with Happiness. But he is not one *jot* the *better* for loving, nor would he have been one *jot* the *worse* if he had never loved thee at all; and yet out of *pure generous* Goodness he loves thee a *thousand* times more than thou lovest thy self, or art ever able to love him; and canst thou be such a *wretched* Thing, so *lost* to all that is *ingenuous* and *modest* as not to return him Love for Love?

5thly. He

5thly. He *began* to love us to such a Degree, as to think nothing *too dear*, or *too good* for us. Considering how *little* we deserve his *Love*, how *much* we have deserved his *Hatred*, and how *uncapable* we are to make him any *valuable* Requitall; it is *sufficient* Matter of Wonder that ever he could prevail with himself to love us in the *least* Degree; but that in the midst of so many Reasons to the contrary he should not only *begin* to love, but to be so *liberal* of his Kindness to us, is Matter of *just* Astonishment. It was a *mighty* Kindness in him to create us what we are, and make such a *plentiful* Provision for our *comfortable* Subsistence here; for wheresoever we direct our Eyes, whether we reflect them *inwards* upon our selves, we behold his Goodness to occupy and *penetrate* the Root and Center of our Beings, and discern the *lively* Characters of his Love in the *incomparable* Frame and Structure of our Natures; or whether we extend them *abroad* towards the things about us, we may perceive our selves like *Fortunate Islands* surrounded with an *Ocean* of Blessings, containing whatsoever is *necessary* for our Sustenance, *convenient* for our Use, and *pleasant* for our Enjoyment. And is it not *wondrous* Love in him to make such *liberal* Provisions for such *undeserving* Guests?

Guests? But this is the *smallest* Part of his Kindness; for he hath inspired us with *immortal* Minds, and Stamp'd them with the most *fair* Impresses of his own *Divinity*, viz. a *Knowledge* of Truth, and a *Love* of Goodness, and a *forward Capacity* of the *highest* Perfection, and *purest* Happiness; and to fill and gratify these our *noble* Faculties and Capacities he hath prepared for us a *Heaven* of *immortal* Joys, and furnished it with all the Delights that this our *Heaven-born* Mind is *capable* of; and lest we should fall short of it, he hath sent his *bles-sed Son* from *Heaven*, to reveal it to us, and shew us the Way thither; to die for our Sins, and obtain and *ratify* the Promise of our Pardon, thereby to encourage us to return to our Duty and Allegiance, without which we are *incapable* of ever enjoying that *beatifical* State. And lest all this should not be *sufficient*, he is always *present* with us to promote our Happiness; *present*, by his *Providence* to *reclaim*, by his *Angels* to *sollicit* us, and by his *Holy Spirit* to *excite* and *co-operate* with our Endeavours: So extreamly *careful* is he, not to be defeated of his *kind* Intentions, to make us *everlastingly* happy. O *Blessed God*! To what a Degree must thou love us, who thinkest none of these Things *too dear* and *good* for us? That dost
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not think thy *Son too good* to redeem us, thy *Spirit* to Sanctify, thy *everlasting Heaven* to Crown and Reward us? And now can our Hearts hold when we think of this? Can we be *cold and indifferent* in the midst of such a *vigorous Flame*? Good God! What are we made of? What *senseless, stony, stupid* Souls do we carry about us, that can be *Love-proof* against so *many* Charms and Endearments; that can listen to so *many* Wonders of Love with such *unconcerned*, such *unaffected* Minds? Methinks if we had but the *common* Sense and Ingenuity of Men in us, it would be impossible for us in the midst of so much Love, not to be melted into a *reciprocal* Kindness.

6thly And lastly, He so *began* to love us, as to condescend by all the Arts of Importunity to *court* us to accept of his Love, That notwithstanding all our Unworthiness, he should begin to love us, and that to so *strange* a Degree, is a most *amazing* Instance of the *infinite* Benevolence of his Nature; but that he should condescend to *address* himself to us, to *court* and *woo* us as he doth to accept of his Love, and to be as *happy* as he would have us, is enough to astonish the most *insensible* Soul, and even to dissolve a Heart of *Rock* into Love, For thus the *Scripture* in the most *pathetick*

Strains describes the Addressees of this *great* Lover of Souls, borrowing *Metaphors* to express his Love to us, from all that is *kind* and *loving* in the Creation; even from the most *melting* Passions in Mankind; from the *Relentings* of Fathers, and *Tearnings* of Mothers Bowels towards their *dearest* Offspring. It paints him in all the *charming* Postures of an *imploring*, *beseeking*, and *importunate* Lover, wooing and intreating us to be *happy*, even with *Tears* of Pity in his Eyes, with *Charms* of Love in his Mouth, and *Tenders* of Mercy in his Hands. And when with all the *Rhetorick* of his Love he can't prevail with us to live, it represents him *weeping* at our *Funerals*, and like a *tender-hearted* Judge pronouncing our *Sentence* with the Tears in his Eyes. By which *Metaphorical* Descriptions he represents to us his *infinite* Concern for our Happiness; how much his Heart is set upon it; and how hardly he can bear a Defeat in his *kind* and *merciful* Intentions towards us. For what but an *infinite* Love could ever have made the King of *Heaven* and *Earth* to stoop so low to his *rebellious* Subjects, as to beseech them to lay down their Weapons of *Hostility* with which they can injure none but themselves, and to listen to his Terms of Mercy, and accept of his Crowns and *ever-lasting*

lasting Preferments? One would have thought it had been enough for him barely to have told us how he loved us, how willing he was to *Pardon* and *Advance* us; and that this had been enough *for ever* to recommend him to the *dearest* Affections of his Creatures; but that he should moreover condescend to *supplicate* our Acceptance, to *beseech* us not to spurn his Love, and *frustrate* its Designs of Mercy to us; *Lord*, how can we think of this without being all *inflamed* with Love to thee! 'Tis true, he doth not come in Person to us, because we are not able to bear the *immediate* Approaches of his Glory; but many a Message of Love he hath sent us transcribed from his very Heart. He sent his *Son* from *Heaven* to us, and clothed him in our Natures, that therein we might be *capable* of conversing freely with him; and all his Errand was to deliver a Message of Love to the World, and to *court* and *importune* them to listen to, and comply with it. And when he returned again to his Father, he instituted an *Order of Men* to supply his Room, and in his Stead, to *woo* the World to be *happy*. For we are *Ambassadors for Christ*, as though God did *beseech* you by us: We pray you in *Christ's* stead, be ye reconciled to God, 2 Cor. 5. 20. So that you are set upon the

Throne, and not only Men, but God himself lies *prostrate* before your *Foot-stool* beseeching you to lay down your Arms, and to be reconciled to your *best* Friend that never did you the *least* Injury, unless that be one that he hath loved you *better* by a *Thousand* Degrees than ever you loved yourselves. And can we be such *barbarous* Wretches as not to listen to him when he thus *humbles* himself before us, and even comes upon his Knees to us for Reconciliation? How justly may the *whole* Creation be astonished to see the *great* Majesty of *Heaven* condescend so *low* as to *beseech* and *entreat* a Company of *rude, disdainful* Rebels, whom he could every Moment *frown* into Nothing, to accept of his Love, and at last comply with Terms of Friendship? Who would ever imagine, (but that *sad* Experience evinces the contrary,) that among *reasonable* Beings there should be found such *Monsters of Ingratitude*, as to persist in Enmity to God after he hath thus *humbled* himself, and made so many *lowly* Addresses only to *court* and *woo* us to be *happy*? And thus you see how many *puissant* Motives to Love are comprehended in these *few* Words, *because he first loved us*; which are such as nothing can ever be able to resist but a Heart that is *steeled* with
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Impudence and *Ingratitude*. So that if after all these Obligations which God hath laid upon us we do not at last surrender up our Hearts unto him, our *Baseness* and *Ingratitude* is such as nothing but our *eternal* Ruine will be able to expiate. For when with all the Endearments of his *Lovingkindness* he finds he cannot prevail on us to love him, the very Consideration how *much* he hath obliged us, and what *unworthy* Requitals we have made him, will but incense him the more against us, till it hath converted his Kindness into *implacable* Fury; and when once the Heats of *wronged* Love take Fire, and kindle into Wrath, it will be a *quenchless* Flame and *everlasting* Burning. Wherefore in the Name of God, Sirs, let us endeavour to affect our Souls with the Sense of this *dear* Love, to warm our Affections at this *heavenly* Fire till it hath *insinuated* it self into them, and converted them into its *own* Substance. And that we may be *successful* herein, let us take with us these *following* Directions.

1. Let us season our Minds with *good* Opinions of God: For since 'tis his Goodness that is the most *immediate* Object of our Love to him, whatsoever Opinions do reflect upon *that*, or any way tend to *cloud* and *disgrace* it, must necessarily *Damp* our Affection towards him. Whilst therefore we look upon

upon God as a *mere arbitrary* Being, as one that conducts all his Actions by a *blind Omnipotent* Self-will, and governs the World and dispenses *Rewards* and *Punishments* to his Creatures according to a *certain fatal* Decree, which he made without Foresight or Consideration ; as one that exacts *Impossibilities* of his Subjects, commands the *Lame* to *run*, the *Blind* to *see*, and without ever enabling them thereunto is resolved to *damn* them *forever* for *Non-performance* : Whilst, I say, we look upon God through such *false* Opticks as these, they must needs represent him exceeding *unlovely* in our Eyes. For though I doubt not but there are *many* Men that love God heartily, notwithstanding they have entertained these *sower* and *gasty* Notions of him ; yet I must seriously profess had I such *black* Opinions of him, I should never be able heartily to love him, though I were sure to be damned *for ever* for neglecting it. Wherefore, if we would kindle in our Souls the Love of God, let us take Care, as much as in us lies, to purge our Thoughts of all *ill* Opinions of him, and to represent him fairly to our Minds what he truly is, and what the *Scripture* represents him to be, *viz.* a most *bountiful* Benefactor unto all his Creation, and an *universal* Lover of the Souls of Men ; one that heartily desires

desires our Welfare, and is always ready to contribute to us whatsoever is *necessary* thereunto. Let us firmly persuade our selves that he desires not our Ruine, but would *have all Men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the Truth*; that when he finally destroys any *particular* Offender, it is in great Mercy to the *Publick*; that he loves not Punishment for its *own* Sake, and never inflicts it but for some *gracious* and *merciful* End. These are such Thoughts of God as are truly *worthy* of him, and infinitely apt to *endear* him to all *considering* Minds.

2ly. Let us frequently consider and revolve in our Minds the *numerous* Reasons and Engagements that we have to love him. For all Virtue whatsoever begins in Consideration, and it being a *rational* Accomplishment, cannot be otherwise acquired but only by *Reason* and *Discourse*, that is, by considering the Reasons and pressing our selves with the Arguments upon which it is founded. And thus we must do in the Case before us; if ever we would attain to a *heartly* Love of God, we must be often entertaining our Thoughts with the Consideration of those *great* Obligations he hath laid upon us to love him; how deeply we are engaged by all the Ties of *Gratitude* and *Ingenuity* to repay him in his *own* Coin,

Coin, and to return him *Love for Love*. Nor will it be *sufficient* to affect our Hearts with the Sense of those Obligations, now and then to reflect a *few slight and transient* Thoughts on them, but with *holy David* we must muse on till the Fire Kindles ; we must fix and stay our Thoughts upon the Consideration of God's *endearing* Love to us, urge and press them *again and again* till we have wrought and chafed them into our Souls, and a *heavenly* Warmth diffuses from them and *enflames* our Hearts with a *divine* Affection. Wherefore let us frequently revolve such Thoughts as these in our Minds ; O my Soul ! How infinitely art thou obliged to love thy God, who hath been such a tender Friend and liberal Benefactor to thee, who loved thee before ever thou wast capable of thinking a Thought of Love towards him ; yea, and when thou didst most justly deserve to be excommunicated from his Favour for ever, and who had no other Aim in loving thee, but to do thee good, and make thee happy, and thought nothing too good for thee that could either promote or compleat thy Happiness ; but is so importunately concerned for thee as to beseech and intreat thee not to reject his Favours ? And canst thou be cold and insensible in the midst of so many prevailing Endearments ? Suppose that thy Fellow-creature had done for thee
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thee but a thousandth Part of what thy God hath done, and thou hadst repayed his Kindness with nothing but Affronts and Indignities ; wouldst thou not call thy self a thousand ungrateful Wretches, and acknowledge thy self infinitely unworthy of his Favours ? And is it less criminal to be ungrateful to God, than to thy Fellow-creature ? Suppose thou hadst a Friend that began to love thee as soon as thou wast born, and had persisted to love thee, notwithstanding thou hadst offered him a thousand Provocations to the contrary ; that had done thee all the good he was able, and constantly repaid thy Injuries with Favours : Would not thy Conscience fly in thy Face, and all that is humane in thee upbraid thy monstrous Baseness ? And hath not thy God obliged thee infinitely more than the best Friend in the World ? How then canst thou excuse thy Coldness and Indifference to him ? Consider, O my Soul, the Eyes of all the spiritual World are upon thee ; Angels and Saints are looking down from their Thrones of Glory to see how thou wilt acquit thy self under all these mighty Obligations, which if any mortal Friend had laid them upon thee, and thou shouldst have so ill requited him, all the World would have hissed at thee for a Monster of Ingratitude. And is it less infamous to be an ungrateful Wretch towards God, than towards a mortal Friend ? With what Confidence then wilt thou lift up thy

thy head among those blessed Spirits who have been Spectators of thy Actions; who have seen thy foul Ingratitude towards thy best Friend, and must therefore brand thee for an inglorious Wretch abandoned of the common Sense and Modesty of humane Nature? And if after you have pressed you Souls with all this mighty Weight of Love, you should be still to learn to *re-love* the blessed Author of it, I know no other Expedient but to send you to the Brutes to be their Scholars; to call for your Spaniels and bid them teach you, and by their kind Returns of your Favours instruct your cold ungrateful Hearts, to make proportionate Returns of Love to your dearest Lord and Master. Thus let us frequently argue with our selves, and repeat these Considerations upon our Minds; and certainly if we have any Sense of Obligations, they cannot fail of *warming* and *affecting* our Hearts.

3dly. Let us endeavour so much as in us lies to moderate our Affections to the World. Love not the World, saith St. John, neither the things that are in the World. If any Man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 Epist. ii. 15. that is, if we *inordinately* love and dote upon the World, if we suffer its Pleasures, Profits, and Honours to creep into, to hamper and inveagle
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our Affections into an *excessive* Delight and Complacency in them, that will so forestal and prepossess us, that we shall find no Room for the Love of God in our Souls : Our Hearts will be so soaked and moistened with *sensual* Desires and Complacencies, that the *pure* Flame of *divine* Love will never be able to take hold of, or kindle upon them. For whilst we immoderately dote upon the World, *that* will so *ingross* our Thoughts, so perpetually *importune* our Desires, that no Friend from *Heaven* will ever be able to come at us ; no good Thought or Consideration that comes to *court* and *woo* our Souls for God will ever find Admittance to them ; or if *now* and *then* they obtrude upon us, and force themselves into our Minds, the World will be so *buisy* about us that we shall not be long at Leisure to attend to them ; but whilst they are addressing to us and importuning our Affections, we shall feel a thousand *Rival Thoughts* swarming and buzzing about us, and *this* will be holding, *that* pulling, the *other* clasping it self about us and *wooing* us not to leave and forsake them. And though between these Competitors for our Love, our Hearts may *now* and *then* be a little *wavering* and *irresolute* ; yet our *fond* Partiality to the World will so vehemently incline
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and *biass* us, that we shall soon reject those *divine* Thoughts that would so fain court us to a *contrary* Affection. Wherefore, if ever we would acquire this *noble* and *heavenly* Virtue of *divine* Love, we must endeavour as much as in us lies to *wean* and withdraw our selves from the World; to rescue our selves from under it's Tyranny and Dominion, into *our own* Power, that so we may be able to dispose of our Time, our Thoughts and Hearts, as shall seem to us most *fit* and *reasonable*. For till we have recovered our Hearts from the World into *our own* Disposal, how can we resign them to God? Before we can give him our selves, we must be in *our own* Power, which no Man can be, so long as he is *inthrall'd* to the World. Wherefore, if we would become *heartty* Lovers of God, we must labour so much as in us lies to get such a *Sovereignty* over our *earthly* Desires and Affections, as that whensoever we are minded to retire from the World and converse with God, we may be able to keep them *off* at such a Distance as that they may not be able to intrude upon us, to mingle themselves with our Contemplations, and divert our Eyes from the *endearing* Prospect of his *infinite* Love and Loveliness. And then our Thoughts will stay and dwell upon this *ra-
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visiting Theme like Bees upon a *sweet* Flower, and never rise till they have extracted thence the *Honey* of *Canaan*, the *delicious* Sweets of *heavenly* Love and Complacency; then we shall muse on till the Fire burns, and never take off our Eyes from God till we have gazed our selves into Captivity to his Love and Beauty.

4thly. If we would attain to the Love of God, we must endeavour, by the *constant* Practice of what is *agreeable* to his Nature, to reconcile our Minds and Tempers to it. For whilst our Minds are *averse* to the Perfections of his Nature, to the *Justice*, *Purity*, and *Goodness* of it, the most *powerful* Motives of his Love and Benevolence will never be able to beget in us an *heartly* Complacency in him. We may admire his Love to us, and be sometimes moved by the consideration of it into *mighty* Transports of *sensitive* Passion; but 'tis impossible we should ever attain to a *fix'd* and *permanent* Delight in him till we are reconciled to his Nature. For all *true* and *constant* Love is founded in a Likeness of Natures; and therefore till we are in some Measure *god-like*, till we are *pure* as he is *pure*, *just* as he is *just*, *good* and *merciful* as he is *good* and *merciful*, we have not as yet so much as laid the Foundation of *divine* Love; nay we are so far from *that*, that we

are under a *prevalent* Repugnancy and Antipathy to the *divine* Nature. Wherefore if ever we would be *sincere* and *heartly* Lovers of God, we must resolve to betake our selves to the *constant* Practice of all those *eternal* Laws of Goodness that are founded in his *blessed* Nature; which if we do, and persist in our Resolution, we shall find the Practice of them will by Degrees render them first *tollerable*, then *easie*, then *delightful*, then *natural* to us. And when once the Laws of God's Nature are thus *transcribed* and *copyed* into ours, when our Hearts and his stand bent the *same* Way, and are for the *main* alike *inclined* and *disposed*; then we are prepared for *divine* Love, made *proper* and *convenient* Fuel to receive that *heavenly* Flame. For as when God sees *himself* in us, his *Goodness*, *Purity* and *Holiness* stamp and impressed upon our Natures, he is inclined by his own *Self-love* to be pleased with, and take Complacency in us; so when we come to see *our* selves in God, to see all that in him for which we value our selves, and to see it all in the *utmost* Perfection in him which is yet so *imperfect* in our selves; *our own* Self-love will *endear* him to us and *wing* our Souls with an *active* *vigorous* Love to him. Wherefore, if we would love God, let us live in the Practice of
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of all *god-like* Virtues till by accustoming our selves thereunto we have conquered *our own* Repugnancies and Antipathies to his *blessed* Nature; and then our Hearts will stand *open* to his Love, and we shall feel it enter into us, and insinuate it self into our Wills and Affections, like a *sprightful* and *active* Flame, till it hath all *inflamed* them with Love, and *converted* them into its *own* Substance.

5thly. And lastly, If we would acquire this *heavenly* Virtue, to all the *foregoing* Directions, we must add *constant* and *earnest* Prayer to *God* For when we have done all, it is most certain that without the Assistance of this Grace we cannot love him; but if we do all, and then implore and Supplicate his Assistance, we have as much Assurance of it, as the Promise of Truth it self can give us. If therefore we have a *heartly* Mind to love him, we shall both do *our own* Part towards it, and earnestly implore him to do *his*. For so when we petition for our *daily* Bread, we do not say our *Prayers*, and then sit down with our Hands in our Bosoms, expecting that Bread should drop from *Heaven* into our Mouths; but we presently betake our selves to some *honest* Employment, and therein diligently endeavour to obtain what we

pray for. And the same Course we shall take if we desire to love God with the same Sincerity as we desire Food: We shall *pray* and *endeavour*, and *endeavour* and *pray*; we should be diligent in doing what is in our Power, and be *importunate* with God to do what is only in *his*. And certainly did we but know the Worth of this *heavenly* Virtue, this *Soul* and *Queen* of all other Graces, we should count *no* Prayers, *no* Tears, *no* Endeavours too much to purchase and obtain it. Did we but consider how *useful* and *delightful* it is, how at once it entices and inlivens Men, what a *powerful* Byass it claps upon their Hearts to incline them to their Duty, and with what Joy and Chearfulness it carries them through the *greatest* Difficulties, and turns their Toils into Recreations; how it *clears* and *smooths* their Countenance, *revives* and *elevates* their Hearts: Did Men, I say, but consider this, they would give neither themselves nor *Heaven* Rest till they felt their *cold* and *sluggish* Souls inspired and animated with it. Wherefore to all our Endeavours after it, let us joyn our *earnest* Prayers to God that he would kindle our *stupid* Hearts, and touch our *cold* Affections with an *outstretch*-*ed* Ray from himself; that he would conquer our Repugnance to him, and represent
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his Love and Beauty to our Souls in such *affecting* and *attractive* Forms as may not fail to captivate our Hearts, and subdue our obstinate Wills that have so long held out against all the Storms and Batteries of his *endearing* Goodness. And if we thus *pray*, and thus *endeavour*, and persevere in *both*, we shall at length most certainly feel this *heavenly* Grace springing up within us, and growing on to Maturity by *insensible* Degrees, till at last it hath gotten an *entire* Possession of our Souls, and subdued all our Powers and Affections to it's *sweet* and *bles-sed* Empire; And then we shall feel our selves acted in *Religion* by a *new* Soul, and carried on through all its *weary* Stages with an *un-speakable* Life and Vigour; then all our Duty will be *naturalized* to us, and we shall do God's Will upon *Earth* with almost the same Chearfulness and Alacrity, as it is done by our *blessed* Brethren in *Heaven*. Which God of his *infinite* Mercy grant: To whom be Honour, &c.

P S A L M ^{xi.} 7.

For the Righteous Lord loveth Righteousness.

BY *Righteousness* here some *Expositors* understand the *Righteousness* of *Punishment* ; because in the foregoing Verse it is said, *upon the wicked he shall rain snares, Fire and Brimstone, &c.* and then it follows why he shall do it ; *for the Righteous Lord loveth Righteousness* : But considering the whole ; I rather believe that by *Righteousness* here is meant *Righteousness* of *Life* and *Manners* : For it seems more probable that the Text is a Reason of the two former Verses, than of that immediately foregoing ; but the whole that is asserted is this, *the Lord tryeth the Righteous ; but the wicked and him that loveth Violence, his Soul hateth.* Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, &c. As if he should have said ; there is a vast Difference between Gods dealing with the *Righteous* and the *Wicked* ; for though sometimes he afflicts the *Righteous*, yet 'tis only to prove and try them, and to render their Virtue more

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exemplary and illustrious; but as for the *Wicked*, when he rains down Punishments on them, it is out of a *just* Hatred and Indignation against them. And the Reason why he is thus differently affected towards these *different* Persons is, because of the *different* Affection he bears towards their *contrary* Qualifications; he loves the *Righteousness* of the *Righteous*, and that makes him chasten them in love, and for *kind* and *merciful* Ends and Purposes; but he hates the *Wickedness* of the *Wicked*, and that makes him proceed against them with so much Wrath and Severity. So that by *Righteousness* here he means that Goodness and Virtue which is *inherent* in *righteous* Persons, is evident from what follows; *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright*; that is, he looks upon them with a most *gracious* and *benevolent* Aspect; which latter Words being only a *fuller* Exemplification of the *former*, plainly shew that by the *Righteousness* mentioned in them is meant the *Righteousness* of *righteous* Persons, and consequently that it doth not signify the *Righteousness* of *Punishment*, but the *Righteousness* of *Manners*: By which we are not to understand that *single* Virtue of *Honesty* or *Justice*, but all the Virtues, or Virtue in

the general in its *utmost* Compass and Latitude. For so in the *sacred Dialect* it is very *usual* to express the *whole* Duty of Man by Righteousness. So Prov. 14. 34. *Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a reproach to any People* ; where the Opposition plainly implies that by *Righteousness* we are to understand all that is *contrary* to Sin ; that is, all that is contained within the Compass of our Duty. So also Heb. 1. 9. *thou hast loved Righteousness, and hated Iniquity* ; where *Righteousness* being opposed to *avopia*, or Transgression of the Law in general, must according to the Rule of Opposition be understood in the *same* Latitude to signify all Obedience to the Law in general. And indeed all our Duty being a *natural* and *eternal* Due, either to God, our Neighbour, or our *selves*, the whole may very well be expressed by *Righteousness*, the Performance of every one of them being an Act of *strict* Justice, the Payment of a *due* Debt, either to *our selves* or *others*. The Meaning therefore of the Words is this ; God, who himself is infinitely *pure*, and *holy*, and *good*, is a *constant hearty* Lover of *Purity* and *Goodness* in others wherefoever he sees or finds it. In the Management of which Argument I shall do these two Things ;

I. Shew

Upon PSALM 11. 7. 409

1. Shew you upon what Principles and Reasons *God* is a Lover of *Virtue* and *Goodness*.

2. What *Indications* he hath given to the World that he is so.

1. I shall shew you upon what Principles and Reasons *God* is a Lover of *Virtue* and *Goodness*; and they are principally these Four.

1. He loves Righteousness, or Goodness as it is an *essential* Perfection of his *own* Nature.

2. He loves it as it is the *main* Principle and Foundation of his *own* Happiness.

3. He loves it as it is that which exalts all *other* Creatures into his *own* Likeness and Resemblance.

4. He loves it as it is the Spring or Cause from whence the *highest* Happiness of his most *beloved* Creatures is derived.

1st. *God* loves Righteousness, or Goodness as it is an *essential* Perfection of his *own* Nature. For supposing *God* to be a *reasonable* Being, as all acknowledge him to be who acknowledge him at all, he must be in all Respects most perfectly *reasonable*, otherwise he would be *deficient* of that *natural* Perfection which the very Notion and

Idea

Idea of God implies; and if he be perfectly *reasonable*, he must be supposed to govern himself, his *Choices*, *Motions* and *Actions* by the *truest*, *best*, and *purest* Reason: And herein consists the *perfect* Holiness and Righteousness which the *Essence* and *Notion* of *God* implies, in a *perfect* Conformity of all his *Choices* and *Actions* to the *eternal* and *infallible* Reason of his own Mind, in *choosing* to do every thing which *right* Reason requires, and *refusing* to do any thing which it forbids. And this is so *essential* to *God*, that to exclude it out of the *Notion* of him is in *Effect* to deny his *Being*, or which is worse, to fancy him an *Almighty* blind *Polyphemus*, that hath an *Arm* of *infinite* Force, but no *Eye* in his *Head* to *guid* or *direct* it. When therefore we submit all our *Choices* and *Actions* to the *Conduct* and *Government* of *right* Reason, we *steer* our *Course* by *Gods* *Compass*, and live and move by the self-same *Rule* whereby he governs himself, and all his *Motions*. And when we do what *God* would have us, we are sure to do what *right* Reason requires, because we are sure he would have us do nothing but what is *agreeable* with the *infallible* Reason of his own Mind. When therefore we submit our *Wills* to *God's*, our *Wills* and his are governed by the self-same Reason,

Reason, even by the most *perfect* Reason of his *All-comprehending* Mind, which never can deceive or be deceived. And when our *Wills, Affections* and *Inclinations* are once reduced under the Government of God's Reason, we are of the *same* Temper with God, because we are formed and tempered by the *same* Reason; we are affected and inclined as he his, and are made Partakers of his *divine* Nature; we are *pure* as he is *pure*, and *holy* as he is *holy*, and do communicate with him in all that Righteousness and Goodness which is the *essential* Glory and Perfection of his *own* Nature. So that Holiness and Righteousness in *us* being only a *Ray* and *Representation* of God, it is no more Wonder that he loves it than that he loves himself, it being nothing but *himself* derived, his *own* Perfection copied out and transcribed into our Temper and Natures. Were the *Sun* a *living* Being, we cannot imagine but as he would be infinitely pleased with his own *inherent* Brightness, so he would be greatly delighted to behold that *vast* Sphere of Light which he diffuses round about him; to see his own *outstretch'd* Rays shining through this *Spacious* World, and glorifying with their *quick* Reflections all those *dark* and *opaque* Bodies that are continually moving round about him.

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How then can we imagine that the *living God*, who is infinitely *glorious* in Holiness himself, and loves himself infinitely for being so, can without *vast* Delight and Satisfaction behold his *own* Beauty, Light, and Purity, shining on the Face of his Creatures; that he should not be *enamoured* with the Reflexions of that which is the Brightness of his *own* Being, and take *infinite* Complacency when he looks down from his Throne, and beholds his Creatures *gilded* with his Rays, and glorified with his *own* Glory? For if *God* love himself, he must love what is *suitable* to himself; and consequently since himself is *Righteous*, he must love Righteousness, or quarrel with the Perfection of his *own* Nature. And this Reason of his Love of Righteousness is implied in the very Words, *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.*

2^{ly}. He loves Righteousness and *true* Goodness, as it is the *main* Principle and Foundation of his *own* Happiness. For if he were not *just*, and *holy* and *good*, he would be a *miserable* Being, notwithstanding all his Power and Knowledge; for though by these he might defend himself from all *foreign* Hurt or Injury, yet could he not secure his *own* Content by them, or enjoy himself with any Peace or Pleasure.

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For *perfect* Holiness, as I have shewed you, consists in an *exact* Conformity of Actions to the *eternal* Rules of Reason; but God having a *full* and *perfect* Comprehension of the *eternal* Reasons of Things, could never be satisfied with himself if he should act Unreasonably, because his Reason would condemn his Practice, and his *own* Knowledge would *libel* and *upbraid* him. For whenever he reflected on himself, his own *All-seeing* Eye would detect him, and by unmasking the Deformity of his Actions would render him an *inglorious* Spectacle to himself. How then could he enjoy himself, whilst in the Glass of his *own* Omniscience he beheld himself so odiously Represented? What Content could he take in his *own* Choices and Actions, whilst his *own* *infallible* Reason disapproved them, and their Unreasonableness exposed them to the *just* Reproaches of his *own* Mind? No certainly, should he any ways swerve in his *own* Choices, Affections, or Actions from the *eternal* Reason of his *own* Mind, he would be so far from being pleased with himself, that he would be his own *eternal* Torment; and that *infinite* Reason which he himself cannot deceive or impose on, would so Expose and Shame him, that whensoever he reviewed himself he would
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be sure to appear a most *gastly* Spectacle in his *own* Eyes. That therefore which renders him so infinitely *happy* in himself, is not so much the Power he hath to defend himself from *foreign* Hurts and Injuries, as the *exact* Agreement of all his Motions and Actions with the *all-comprehending* Reason of his *own* Mind. He always sees what is *best*, and what he so sees he always *chuses* and *affects*; and this makes him perfectly satisfied with himself, and fills him with *infinite* Joy and Complacency. When ever he surveys himself in the *glorious* Mirror of his *own* Mind, he discerns nothing in himself but what is infinitely *lovely* and *amiable*, nothing but what exactly corresponds with the *fairest* Idea of his own *infinite* Reason; every Thing in him is as it should be, every Motion and every Action so perfectly *good* and exactly *reasonable*, that his own *all-seeing* Eye can discern no possible Degree of Perfection wanting in them; and this makes him *infinitely* pleased with himself, *infinitely* joyed and contented in the Prospect of his *own* Beauty and Glory. So that God's *Holiness* and *Righteousness*, or which is the same Thing, the *exact* Agreement of his *Choices* and *Actions* with the *infallible* Reason of his *own* Mind, being the Principle and *eternal* Spring of his Happiness,

ness, it is no Wonder if he loves it where-
soever he finds it; for how should he forbear
being *pleased and delighted* with it, when he
hath such a *continued* Experiment of the
blessed Effects of it in his *own* Bosom; when
he feels himself made *happy* by it, and hath
every Moment a *fresh* Relish of the Joys
and Pleasures which result from it? Can
he be so *insensible* of his *own* Happiness as
not to be enamoured with the *blessed* Cause
of it? Or can the Tree be *indifferent* to him,
when the Fruit of it is so infinitely *grateful*?
No certainly, it is impossible but that the
eternal Sense he hath in himself of the Joy,
the Pleasure, the Bliss of being *holy*, should
infinitely *endear* Holiness to him, and en-
gage his Soul in an *everlasting* Love of it.

3dly. God loves Righteousness as it is an
Improvement and *Exaltation* of his Crea-
tures into his *own* Likeness and Resemblance.
Every Being that loves it self, naturally af-
fects, so far as it is able, to *derive* it self,
to beget its *own* Image and propagate its
own Likeness and Resemblance; which is
an *immediate* Consequence of that Principle
of Self-love that is in us, which inclines us
to *encrease* and *multiply* our selves, and dis-
fuse and spread *our own* Tempers and Na-
tures. And no Wonder then that God,
who is the *best* of Beings, and whose Love
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to himself is as *infinite* as his *own* Beauties and Perfections, should affect to *derive* and *communicate* himself, to *beget* and *propagate* his own most *amiable* Image in his Creatures. The *infinite* Love which he bears to himself cannot but engage him to *like* and approve his *own* Likeness; and what he *likes* he must needs be inclined to produce where it is not, and to love where it is. But now Righteousness, being that *moral* Attribute which comprises all those Perfections of his Nature, wherein the Beauty and Glory of it consists, is the only Accomplishment that can render a Creature *like* him in that which renders him so infinitely *lovely* in his *own* Eyes. As for *Omnipotence*, *Omniscience*, *Eternity*, and *Omnipresence*, they are *amiable* only as they are crowned with *infinite* Righteousness and Goodness, and abstracted from these they have nothing of Form or Comeliness in them. That therefore which moulds us into a Resemblance of God, and renders us *like* him in that which is the Beauty of all his *other* Attributes, is Righteousness; and therefore this he must love if he love himself, because tis his *own* Image: As for *Power*, and *Knowledge*, and *length of Duration*, though we should partake of them with him to the *highest* Degree that is possible for Creatures, yet

yet we may be infinitely *unlike* him; for so the *Devils* are, who yet are liberally endowed with these *natural Perfections* of the *Divinity*; but the more they imploy their *Power* and *Knowledge* to *unrighteous* Purposes, the more *ungodlike* they are for being *powerful* and *knowing*; and then only are *Knowledge* and *Power* *god-like* Perfections, when Righteousness and Goodness is their Scope and Rule; for without these they are only the Perfections of *Devils*; but *good* and *righteous Devils* are Contradictions in Terms. Since therefore 'tis Righteousness only that can stamp us *god-like* Creatures, *God* must needs love it out of that *natural* Inclination which he and all *other* Beings have to propagate his *own* Likeness. For without Righteousness no Creature can resemble him; and therefore if he love to be resembled, as he must needs do, because he loves himself, he must love *that* which gives the Resemblance; and *this*, and *this* only is Righteousness and *true* Goodness.

4^{thly}. And lastly. *God* loves Righteousness as it is the Spring or Cause from whence the *highest* Happiness of his Creatures is derived. For he loves Beings *more or less* according to their *intrinsic* Worth and Value; and doubtless of all Orders of Be-

ings there are none so *valuable* as the *rational*; and therefore if he love these most, he cannot but be desirous of their Happiness; and if he be, he cannot but love that which is the Spring and Cause of it, and this is *universal* Righteousness. For the Foundation of our Happiness must necessarily be laid in the Perfection of our Natures, and our Natures being *rational* the Perfection of them must consist in a *perfect* Compliance of all their Powers and Faculties with the *eternal* Rules of Reason, which is all one with *universal* Righteousness. For doubtless the *highest* Perfection of *reasonable* Faculties is to act most reasonably, and then they act most reasonably when they govern themselves by the *unchangable* Laws of Righteousness. Righteousness therefore being our Perfection as we are *reasonable* Beings must necessarily be the Spring and Principle of our Happiness, and 'tis as impossible for us to be *happy* without it as 'tis to be *well* in Sicknes, or at Ease under Pain. For to the Happiness of every Nature that is *capable* of being happy two Things are requisite; First, that there be no disorder within it self; that its *Parts* and *Faculties* be not disordered, nor their *Vigour* and *Activity* lessened and abated: Secondly, that all it's *Faculties* be employed and exercised

cised about such Objects as are most *grateful* and *suitable* to their Natures; upon both which Accounts Righteousness is most *necessary* to the Happiness of every *reasonable* Nature. For in the *first* Place, 'tis Righteousness that rectifies all their Disorders, and reduces them to their *native* and most *genuine* Temper. No *reasonable* Nature is *well*, and in Health, so long as it acts unreasonably and unrighteously; it's Pulse beats disorderly while it beats either *faster* or *slower* than *Right Reason* prescribes, while it acts either on this side or beyond the *Medium*, in the *Defect*, or *Excess* of Virtue; and whilst 'tis thus *sick* and *distempered*, 'tis impossible it should be *happy*. But now by acting righteously it revives and grows *well* again; it throws off those *unreasonable*, and consequently *unnatural* Inclinations that clogg'd and obstructed all its *regular* Motions, and by Degrees recovers to the *native* Temper and Complection of a *rational* Nature; and when once it hath perfectly discharged it self of all those *unreasonable* and *unrighteous* Humours that disordered it, it will then live in *perfect* Health and Ease, and all its *languishing* Faculties be restored to their *natural* Vigour and Activity. And then *secondly*, as Righteousness recovers us from all the Distempers of our Na-

ture, so it imployes and exercises our Faculties about such Objects as are most *grateful* and *suitable* to them. For Truth and *true* Goodness are the *only* Objects that can gratify a *reasonable* Nature acting reasonably; and about these doth Righteousness naturally dispose our Faculties to imploy and exercise themselves; it disposes our *Understandings* to *contemplate* upon, and our *Wills* to *embrace* and *chuse* that God who is the Fountain of all Truth and Goodness: For every Thing loves its *own like*, and what it loves, it is inclined to think on. So that when we are *righteous*, as God is, we shall naturally love him, because he is *like* us; and then our Love to him will still incline our Thoughts to the Contemplation of his Beauty and Glories, and so the more *righteous* we grow the *more* we shall love him, and the *more* we love him the *more* our Understandings will be enclined to meditate upon him, and so *more* and *more* till we arrive at that *City of Vision* where we shall see him Face to Face, and be *eternally* ravished with the Love and Contemplation of him. Thus Righteousness you see is the Spring and Cause of our Happiness, and being so, he must needs love it, who above all things desires and solicits our Welfare: For he being perfectly *happy* from himself,
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cannot need our Misery to augment his Happiness; and therefore cannot desire it; but on the contrary, he must desire our Happiness out of that *infinite* Complacency and Delight which he takes in *his own*, it being impossible that he whose Delight and Love is always founded on the same Motives should delight in *contrary* Objects, in *different* Subjects, in *Happiness* in himself, and *Misery* in his Creatures: And if he desire our Happiness, as most certainly he doth, how can he forbear to love and take Complacency in that which contributes so much to it? Thus you see upon what Reasons and Principles it is that God is so *firm* a Lover of Righteousness.

2. I now proceed in the Second Place to shew you what Indications he hath given the World of his *steady* Affection and Goodwill to Righteousness. Now these, though they are many and almost *infinite*, may be reduced to Two *general* Heads. 1st. The *natural* Indications; 2^{dly}. The *Supernatural* ones: Of both which I shall endeavour to give you some brief Account.

1. God hath given us Sundry *natural* Indications of his Love of Righteousness; all which I shall reduce to these Four Heads:

1. He hath *imprinted* a Law upon our Natures which approves of *righteous* Actions, and condemns their contraries.
2. He hath *endued* our Minds with a *grateful* Sense of *righteous* Actions, and a *natural* Horror of their contraries.
3. He hath *coupled* good Effects to all *righteous* Actions, and *bad* ones to their contraries.
4. He hath *implanted* in us *natural* Abodings of the *future* Reward of *righteous* Actions, and the *future* Punishment of their contraries.

1st. One Indication of God's Love of Righteousness is his *imprinting* a Law upon our Natures which approves all *righteous* Actions, and disapproves their contraries; and this Law is that *natural* Reason which is either *connate* with our Understanding, or doth immediately result from the *righteous* Use and Exercise of it. For such is the Frame of our Understandings that whensoever we impartially *reason* about Things, we are forced to distinguish between *Good* and *Evil*, and without offering *infinite* Violence to our Faculties we can never persuade our selves, that to *blaspheme* God, or to *reverence* him, to *lie* or *speake* Truth, to *honour* our Parents, or to
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scorn or despitefully *use* them, are *indifferent* Things; for as soon as we open the Eye of our Reason, we immediately discern such an *essential* Difference between them, as forces us to condemn the One, and approve the Other: And hence we see that as for the *great* Strokes of Unrighteousness, they have as much the *universal* Judgment of our Reason against them, as any *false* Conclusion in the *Mathematicks*; whereas the Goodness of their *contrary* Virtues is as universally Acknowledged by us as the Truth of any *first Principle* of *Philosophy*. God therefore having created us with such a Faculty as doth so necessarily pass such a *contrary* Judgment upon *righteous* and *unrighteous* Actions, we must either say that he hath made us judge falsely or else acknowledge this Judgment to be his as well as the Faculty that made it; and if it be, then 'tis a *sufficient* Indication of his Love of Righteousness, that he hath so framed our Faculties, that without *apparent* Violence they cannot but approve of it. For whatsoever our Faculties do naturally Speak, they are made to speak from the Author of Nature; they only speak what he hath Dictated to them, and so what they say *he* says, who hath put his *Word* into their Mouths, and hath made them speak

it. Our Faculties therefore being God's *Oracles*, whatsoever they freely and naturally pronounce is as much his *Word* as any *outward* Revelation. Since therefore they so unanimously pronounce their Approbation of Righteousness, it is as *plain* a Signification of God's Love and Approbation of it, as if he himself should immediately pronounce it by a Voice from *Heaven*.

2ly. Another Indication of God's Love of Righteousness, is his *enduing* our Minds with a *grateful* Sense of *righteous* Actions, and a *natural* Horror of their Contraries. We find that antecedently to all our *Reasoning* and *Discourse*, there is something in our Natures to which Virtue is a *grateful* Thing, and its Contraries very *nauseous* and *loathsome* ; for thus before we are *capable* of Reasoning our selves into any *Pleasure* or *Displeasure*, our Nature is rejoiced at a *kind* or a *just* Action, either in *our selves* or *others*, before we can speak, or are *capable* of being *allured* by Hope, or *awed* by Correction. We are sensibly pleased when we see we have pleased those that have obliged us, and as sensibly grieved when we are *conscious* of having Grieved and Offended them. We love to see those fare *well* whom we have seen deserve *well*, and when any *unjust* Violence is offered them our
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Nature shrinks at and abhors it. We pity and compassionate the *Miserable*, when we know not why, and are ready to offer at their Relief, when we can give no Reason for it ; which is a *plain* Evidence that these Things proceed not merely either from our Education, or *deliberate* Choices, but from some *natural* Instinct *antecedent* to both, and that in the very Frame of our Nature there is implanted by the Author of it a *Sympathy* with Virtue and an *Antipathy* to Vice. And hence it is, that in the Beginnings of Sin our Nature is so *shy* of an *evil* Action, and doth so *startle* and *boggle* at it ; that it approaches it with such a *modest* Coyness, and goes blushing to it like a Virgin to an *Adulterers* Bed ; that it passes into Sin with such *Regret* and *Reluctancy*, and looks back upon it with such *Shame* and *Confusion* ; which in our *tender* Years, when we are not as yet arrived to the Exercise of our Understandings, cannot be supposed to proceed from Reason or Conscience, but from some *secret* Instinct of Nature, which by these and such like Indications declares it self violated and offended. And this plainly shews the *mighty* Respect that God hath to Righteousness, that he hath woven into our Beings such a *grateful* Sense of it, and such a Horror of its Contraries. For this

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natural Sense was doubtless intended by God to be the *first* Guide of *humane* Nature, that so when as yet 'tis not *capable* of following Reason and Conscience, it might be led on to Righteousness by its own *necessary* Instincts; that these might dispose us to our Duty, and keep us out of all *wicked* Prejudices, till we come under the Conduct of our Reason; that so this may then lead us forward with more Ease and Facility in the Paths of Righteousness. What a *plain* Indication therefore is this of God's Love of Righteousness, that he hath taken so much Care to incline our Natures to it, that he hath not only given us *reasonable* Faculties that do naturally direct us to Righteousness, but hath also taken so much Care to lead us to it by Instinct, till we are grown up to the Exercise of those Faculties, and are *capable* of being guided by them?

3ly. Another Indication of God's Love of Righteousness is his coupling *good* Effects to *righteous* Actions, and *bad* ones to their Contraries. For if we consult the Consequents of *humane* Actions, we shall generally find that all *moral* Good resolves into *natural*, in the *Health* and the *Pleasure*, the *Credit* and *Tranquility* of those that practise it. For so the first *Great Mover* in that

that Course and Series of Things which he hath established in the World, hath ordered and disposed it, that every Action which is *morally Good*, should ordinarily tend to, and determine in some *natural* Benefit and Advantage; that the *good* Government of every Passion should tend to the Tranquility of our Minds, and the *due* Regulation of every Appetite center in the Health and Pleasure of our Bodies; that *Abstinence* and *Humility*, *Honesty* and *Charity* should have *happy* Effects chained to them, that they should contribute to our *Good* both *private* and *publick*; and that their contrary Vices should be always pregnant with some *mischievous* Inconvenience; that they should either untune the *Organs* of our Reason, or *impair* the Vigour and Activity of our Tempers, or *imbroid* the Peace and Tranquility of our Minds, or *invade* the *Common-weal* of Societies, which includes the Interest of each *particular* Member. Such *contrary* Effects as these are as necessary to *vertuous* and *vicious* Actions in that Course of Things which *God* hath established, as *Light* is to the *Sun*, or *Heat* to the *Fire*; by which he hath plainly *demonstrated* how contrarily he is affected to those *contrary* Causes. For by those *natural* Goods and *Evils* which are appendent to *humane* Actions,

tions, he hath plainly *distinguished* them into *moral Goods* and *Evils*; and those *good* and *bad* Effects which he hath annexed to them are most *sensible* Marks of his Love of the *one*, and his Hatred of the *other*. For to be sure he would never have made Righteousness the Cause of so much *good* to us, if he had not loved it; nor Wickedness the Spring of so many Mischiefs and Inconveniences, if he had not hated and abhorred it. The Effects of Righteousness are ordinarily a *Reward*, and the Consequents of Sin a *Punishment* to it self, and this by God's *own* Order and Disposal; and pray by what Significations can a *Law-giver* more effectually declare his Love and Hatred of Actions than by rewarding and punishing them?

4thly, And lastly. Another Indication of God's Love of Righteousness, is the *natural* Presages and Abodings which he hath implanted in our Natures of the *future* Reward of *righteous* Actions, and the *future* Punishment of their Contraries. That there are such Abodings as these in *humane* Nature is apparent by this, that antecedently to all *divine* Revelation, Men of all *Ages*, *Nations* and *Religions* have felt and experienced them; yea, and that it hath been experienced not only among the *politer* and
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more *learned* Nations, who may be supposed to be persuaded of a *future* State by the *probable* Arguments of *Philosophy*; but also among the most *barbarous* and *uncultivated*, who cannot be supposed to have believed it upon Principles of Reason: For though some of them have been so *rude* as to disband Society, and live like *Beasts* without Laws and Government; yet have they not been able to extinguish these their *natural* Hopes and Fears of *future* Rewards and Punishments; which is an *unanswerable* Evidence how deeply the Sense of *another* World is imprinted upon *humane* Nature. And as we have such a *natural* Sense of a *future* State as we cannot easily stifle, so our Minds do naturally abide that we shall fare *well* or *ill* in it according as we behave *our selves* righteously or unrighteously in this Life. When we do well and reflect upon it, it leaves a *delicious* Farwel on our Minds; our Conscience smiles and promises *glorious* Things that we shall reap from it, most *happy* and *blessed* Fruits in the *other* World. And as the Sense of doing *well* doth naturally suggest to us the most *ravishing* Hopes and *blisful* Expectations, so the sense of doing *ill* fills our Minds with *sad* and *dire* Presages; our Conscience abodes us a *black* and *woeful* Eternity wherein we shall
dearly

dearly pay for our *sinful* Delights and Gratifications. And though for the *present* we can divert and stifle this *troublesome* sense of our Natures, yet *Naturam expellas---* is true in this also; *though we thrust off Nature with a Fork, yet 'twill return again upon us*; and a *Fit* of Sicknes, a *sudden* Calamity, or a *serious* Thought will soon awake and revive in it these *black* Prognosticks of our *future* Torment. And hence we generally find that *bad* Men are *most* afraid of *Eternity*, when they are *nearest* to it, their Fear like all other *natural* Motions being *swiftest* when 'tis *nearest* it's Center. For so Plato hath observ'd *ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐγγύῳ, ὅταν ἂν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ᾖ πλησίον θανάτου, ἢ ἂν ἑαυτὸν ἰσχυρῶς νομίσῃ πλησίον αὐτοῦ, τότε ἐν αὐτῷ ἀναίσχυντος ὁ φόβος καὶ ἡ μετάνοια τοῦ μέλλοντος, ἣν οὐδέποτε ἐνόησεν*, *When Men are near Death, or suppose themselves near it, there arises in them great Fear and Thoughtfulness of a future State, which before they never thought of.* And that this springs not from Superstition but from Nature is evident by this, that *Atheists* themselves who are *most* *remote* from Superstition, when they come to die are rarely able to suppress this *ominous* Dread and Fear of *another* World, but in despite of themselves are forced into those *dismal* Expectations which before they laughed at: A *clear* Demonstration that these *ill* Abodings spring from something within them that they cannot conquer, and that what their Minds now

speak is not so much the Sense of their Opini-
 on as their Nature. And this Language of
 Nature is a *clear* Expression of God's Love
 of Righteousness; for the Voice of Nature
 is only the Voice of the *God* of Nature *eccho-*
ed and *rebounded*; and to be sure whatever
 he imprints upon our Natures is the Sense
 and Meaning of *his own* Heart, since his
 Veracity will not permit him to print any
 Falshood there. And since by these our
natural Abodings the *God* of Nature pro-
 poses to us a *future* Reward if we are *right-*
eous, and a *future* Punishment if we are
 wicked, he hath hereby as certainly declared
 to us how much he *loves* Righteousness
 and *hates* the Contrary, as he can possibly
 do by the most *express* Promise which he
 hath made to reward the *one*, or Threat-
 ning to punish the *other*. And thus you see
 what *natural* Indications and Discoveries
 God hath made of his *unfeigned* Love of
 Righteousness, which are such as without
 any *additional* Revelation are sufficient to
 convince considering Men that *God* is a
 most *sincere* and *affectionate* Lover of Right-
 eousness and *righteous* Men, and that if
 we will but unfeignedly submit our selves
 to the *eternal* Laws of Goodness we shall
 thereby make our selves the *best* Friend
 who is a *never-failing* Fountain of Good-
 ness,

ness, and who will do us more *good* than all the Beings in the World, should they conspire to be our Benefactors; and that on the Contrary, if we persist in Sin and Unrighteousness we shall most certainly provoke him to be our *mortal* Enemy, and render our selves *eternally* odious and hateful in his Eyes; that his *incensed* Wrath will *sooner* or *later* break forth upon us and prosecute us with *eternal* Vengeance, and that we can expect nothing but *black* and *dismal* Issues while we are hated by him who is the Fountain of all Love and Goodness. All this we may be sufficiently convinced of by seriously attending to those *natural* Discoveries which God hath made of his Love of Righteousness. But yet because he saw Mankind so *unattentive* to the Voice of their Natures, so *unobservant* of it's Language and Meaning as to run headlong on, notwithstanding all it's Countermands, into the *greatest* Impiety and Wickedness; he hath been graciously pleased to add to these *natural* Discoveries of his Love of Righteousness sundry *great* and *eminent supernatural* ones; such as one would think were *sufficient* to rouse and awake the most *stupid* and *insensible* Creatures into a *serious* Attention to them; all which are reducible to these *following* Heads.

I. His

1. His conferring such *great* and *miraculous* Favours upon *righteous* Persons, and inflicting such *severe* Judgments on the *Wicked*.
2. His making so many *Revelations* to the World for the promoting of Righteousness, and discountenancing of Sin.
3. His sending *his own Son* into the World to transact such *mighty* Things, for the Incouragement of Righteousness, and discouragement of Sin.
4. His promising such *vast* Rewards to us, upon Condition of our being *righteous*, and denouncing such *fearful* Punishments against us in Case we do neglect it.
5. His grantaing his *blessed Spirit* to us to excite us to, and assist us in our Endeavours after Righteousness.

1. One *supernatural* Expression of God's Love of Righteousness is his conferring *great* and *miraculous* Favours upon *righteous* Persons, and inflicting *severe* Judgments upon the *Wicked*. And of this we have *infinite* Instances in the several Ages of the World, there being scarce any *History*, either *sacred* or *prophane*, which abounds not with them; several of which both *Blessings* and *Judgments* do as plainly evince themselves to be intended for *Rewards* and *Punishments*, as if they had been attended with a Voice from *Heaven* declaring the Reasons

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for which they were bestowed and inflicted. For how many *famous* Instances have we of the *miraculous* Deliverances of *Righteous* Persons, who by an *invisible* Hand have been rescued from the *greatest* Dangers, when in all *outward* Appearance their Condition was *hopeless* and *desperate*; and of *wonderful* Blessings that have happened to them, not only *without*, but *contrary* to all *secondary* Causes? Of *some* that have been so *eminently* rewarded in Kind as that the *Good* which they received was a most *visible* token of the *Good* which they did; of *others* that have received the Blessings they ask'd whilst they were praying for them, and obtained the Grant of them with such *distinguishing* Circumstances as did plainly signify them to be the Answers and Returns of their *devout* Desires? And so on the contrary, how many *notable* Examples are there of such *miraculous* Judgments inflicted upon *unrighteous* Persons as have either exceeded the Power of all *secondary* Causes, or else have been caused by them contrary to their *natural* Tendency; of Men that have been punished in the very Act of their Sin, and sometimes in the very Part by which they have offended; that have had the Evil of their Sin retaliated upon them in a *correspondent* Evil of Suffering, and been punished with

with those very *Judgments* which they have imprecated on themselves in Justification of a *Fallshood*? Now though in the *ordinary* Course of Things, that of the *Wise Man* is most true, *that we know neither love nor hatred, by anything that is before us, because ordinarily all things come alike to all, and there is one Event to the Righteous and the Wicked, Eccles. ix. 1, 2.* yet when the Providence of God so visibly steps out of it's *ordinary* Course, to *bless* the *Righteous* and *punish* the *Wicked*, it is a *plain* Indication of his *Love* to the *one*, and his *Hatred* to the *other*. For these *irregular* Providences have *plain* and *visible* Tokens of God's *Love* and *Anger* imprinted on their Foreheads, and it would be *Stupidity* to attribute them either to a *blind* Chance, or the *necessary* *Revolutions* of *secondary* Causes, when they are stamp'd with such *legible* Characters of their being designed and intended for *Rewards* and *Punishments*. For if these were either *casual* or *necessary*, why should they not happen *alike* to all, as well as *ordinary* Providences? Why should not there be as *many* Examples of the *miraculous* Blessings and Deliverances of the *Unrighteous*, as there are of the *Righteous*? Why should not as many Men have suffered as remarkably the *Evils* which they have imprinted on themselves in attesting

the *Truth*, as there have in attesting *Lies* and *Falshoods*? Why should so many have been struck *dumb* or *dead* in the Act of Perjury, and not *one* that we ever heard of, suffer the *like* Calamity in witnessing the *Truth*? In a word, why should so many *bad* Men have suffered such Calamities as were *plain* Retaliations in Kind of their *cruel* and *unjust* Actions, as *Adonibezek* (for instance) did, in the cutting off his *Thumbs* and *great Toes*, whilst so few, if any, for *doing* Justice upon others have by any such *casual* and *irregular* Providence been exposed to the *Evils* they inflicted? Since therefore in every Age of the World there have happened such *Goods* to *righteous* Men as have the *plainest* Characters of *divine* Rewards upon them, and such *Evils* to the *Wicked* as do evidently bespeak themselves intended for *divine* Punishments, *God* hath hereby sufficiently declared his *Love* of the *one*, and his *Hatred* of the *other*. For by their *Rewards* and *Punishments* all *Lawgivers* do declare their *Love* and *Hatred* of the *Facts* they are annexed to; and therefore to be sure if the *Supreme* Lawgiver had not loved *Righteousness* and hated the contrary, he would never have so eminently rewarded the *one* and punished the *other*, as he hath apparently done.

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2dly. Another *Supernatural* Indication of God's Love of Righteousness is his making so many *Revelations* to the World for the promoting of Righteousness and discountenancing of Sin. That God hath made *sundry* Revelations to the World is evident in Fact, because there are *sundry* Revelations which have been sufficiently demonstrated by those *miraculous* Effects of the *divine* Power which have accompanied the Ministration of them; such are those contained in the *five Books* of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, which have been almost amply confirmed both by the Miracles which were wrought by the *inspired* Authors of them; and by the *exact* Accomplishments of the *several* Predictions contained in them; and such is also that *last* and *best* Revelation contained in the *New Testament*, which both by the *Types* and *Predictions* contained in the *Law* and the *Prophets*, and by the *infinite* Miracles wrought by *Jesus* and his *Followers*, who were the *immediate* Ministers of it; together with its own *inherent* Goodness; is so effectually demonstrated *divine*, that no Man who weighs the Proof of it can suspect it, unless he be infinitely prejudiced against it. Now if you consult these *several divine* Revelations, you will plainly perceive that the main Drift and Design of them is to pro-

mote Righteousness, and suppress whatsoever is contrary to it ; that the several Revelations made to *Abraham* and his Children were all but one repeated Covenant of Righteousness ; that the *Law of Moses* consisted partly of *ceremonious Rights*, which were either intended for *divine Hieroglyphicks* to instruct the *dull and stupid Jews* in the Principles of *inward Purity and Goodness*, or else for *Types and sacred Figures* of the *holy Mysteries of the Gospel* ; partly of Precepts of *moral Righteousness*, together with some *few prudential* ones that were *suitable* to the *Genius and Polity* of that People ; and partly of such *Promises and Threats* as were most apt to oblige them to the Practice of those *righteous Precepts*. As for the *Prophets*, the Substance of their Revelations, was either *Reprehensions of Sin*, together with *severe Denunciations* against it ; or *Invitations to Righteousness*, together with *gracious Promises of Rewards* to follow it ; or *Predictions of the Messias*, and that *everlasting Righteousness* which should be introduced by him. And then as for the *Gospel*, all the Duties of it consist either in *Instances of Means of Righteousness* ; and all the *Doctrines* of it are nothing else but *powerful Arguments and Motives* to persuade us to the Practice of those Duties.

Thus

Thus Righteousness you see is the *main* Center to which all *true* Revelation tends, the Mark at which the *righteous* Lord hath continually levelled and directed it. What a *plain* Demonstration therefore is this of the *unfeigned* Love and Respect he bears it, that he did not think it sufficient to imprint a *Law of Righteousness* upon our Natures, and stamp upon our Beings so *many* *Indications* of his Love to it, but seeing us *swerve* and *deviate* from it hath from time to time by so many *loud* and *reiterated* Voices from *Heaven* invited and called us back again ; so that if he be *cordial* and *sincere* in what he says, (as it would be *absurd* and *impious* to suspect the contrary,) we cannot doubt but he heartily loves that which by so many *immediate* Revelations he hath so earnestly importuned us to embrace.

3dly. Another *supernatural* Indication of God's Love of Righteousness is his sending *his own Son* into the World to transact such *mighty* Things for the Encouragement of it, and persuading Men to it. For to advance Righteousness was the *main* Design of all those *mighty* Things which the *Son* of God did and suffered in this World ; the Design of all that *holy* and *innocent* Life which he led was to propose to our Imitation a *perfect* Example of Righteousness, that

so treading our Way before us we might have not only the Line of his Precepts, but also the Print of his Foot-steps to direct us, and that by beholding so *fair* a Draught of Righteousness drawn so exquisitely to the Life, and in every Part so exactly answering to the *sweetest* and most *amiable* Ideas of it, we might be both invited and instructed to *copy* and *imitate* it in our Actions. For what he saith of that *illustrious* Act of *Charity* and *Humility*, his washing his Disciples Feet, is truly applicable to the whole Course of his Actions; For *I have given you an Example, that you should do as I have done unto you*, Joh. xiii. 15. And as his Life was an Example of Righteousness, so his Death was a most *urgent* Motive to it; for hereby he made Expiation for our Sins and obtained an Act of *Pardon* and *Indemnity* for every Rebel that would lay down his Arms and return to his Duty and Allegiance; and by obtaining this he hath given us *infinite* Encouragement to return, since if we do so, we have most *ample* Assurance that we shall be received into Grace and Favour. And though I cannot deny but if *God* had pleased he might have granted such an Act of Pardon to us without the Consideration of *Christ's Death and Sacrifice*; yet I am sure, if he had, it could never have been such an

effectual Motive as it was to oblige us to Righteousness for the *future*. For should he have granted us Pardon merely upon our Repentance without any *other* Motive or Consideration, he would have discovered so much *seeming* Easiness and Indulgence in such a Procedure, as would have very much imboldened such *disingenuous* Creatures as we to presume upon his Lenity, and turn his Grace into Wantonness. And if to prevent our presuming upon his Lenity it was necessary that he should have some *other* Motive to pardon us besides *that* of our Repentance, then it was no less *necessary* that this *other* Motive should be such as did clearly argue and evince his *righteous* Severity; for otherwise it would have no Force in it to prevent our Presumption. And what Motive of Pardon could better evince his Severity than the Suffering of some *other* in our Room, especially the Suffering of *his own* Son, the *greatest* and *dearest* Person in the whole Creation? For not to be moved to grant a *publick* Pardon to us upon our *heartly* Repentance unless this *blessed* Person would engage to die for us, whose *infinite* Greatness gave such an *inestimable* Value to his Sufferings as rendred them *adequate* to what we had deserved to suffer, was as *great* an Argument of his *inflexible* Severity

against Sin, as if he should have destroyed at one Blow the whole World of Sinners. So that as he hath expressed an *infinite* Mercy to us in admitting *his own* Son to die for us, so in refusing to pardon us upon any *less* Motive than his *precious* Death, he hath expressed an *infinite* Hatred to our Sins; and so that very *Death* which moved God to pardon us, moves us to stand in Awe of his Severity, the Death of the Son of God upon which we are pardoned being the most *terrible* Instance that ever was of the Desert of our Sin, and God's Displeasure against it. Thus our *blessed* Lord hath not only given us the *greatest* Encouragement by procuring our Pardon to return from our Iniquities, but by procuring it in such a *formidable* way he hath given us the most *dreadful* Warning of God's Severity against them. So that now we cannot think upon the Reason for which our *past* Offences are forgiven, without being vehemently moved to *future* Obedience. And thus the *main* Design, you see, both of Christ's *Life* and *Death*, was to recal us from Sin to the Practice of Righteousness: And hence he is said to have given himself for us, to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good Works, Tit. ii. 14. And then he arose again from the Dead to confirm

firm that *righteous* Doctrine which he had revealed to the World, and visibly ascended into *Heaven* to give us an *ocular* Demonstration of the *heavenly* Rewards of Righteousness; and there he now sits at the *right Hand* of God, to assure us, that if we persevere in Righteousness, we shall be continually befriended in the Court of *Heaven* through his *all-powerful* Intercession; and hath assured us that at the End of the World he will come to *Judgment*, and faithfully distribute those *Rewards* and *Punishments* which here he promised and threatned to *righteous* and *unrighteous* Persons. Thus the *main* Drift, you see, of all these *great* Transactions of our *Saviour*, was to advance the Interest of Righteousness and *true* Goodness. What a *mighty* Evidence therefore is this of God's *great* Love of Righteousness, that he should send *his own* most *blessed* Son upon its Errand, to transact such *mighty* Things on its Behalf? For by sending *Christ* into the World, and exposing him to Misery for Righteousness Sake, he did in Effect declare that he valued the Interest of Righteousness more than the present Happiness and Enjoyment of his most *dearly beloved* and *only begotten* Son; and we may most certainly conclude, that had not Righteousness been infinitely *dear* to him, he would

would never have *authorized* his *dearest* Son to take such *infinite* Pains to promote it.

4thly. Another *supernatural* Indication of God's Love of Righteousness is his promising such *vast* Rewards to us upon it, and denouncing such *fearful* Punishments against us if we despise and neglect it. For besides all those *temporal* Rewards he hath proposed to us if we *seek the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteousness thereof*, he hath erected a *Heaven of immortal* Joys and Felicities to crown and entertain it ; a *Heaven* that contains in it all the Beatitudes that *humane* Nature is capable of, all that *Truth* that the most *capacious* Mind can comprehend, and all that *Good* that the *vastest* Affections can either crave or contain : In a word, a *Heaven* whose *Blisses* are all as *large* as our *immense* Desires, and all as *lasting* as our *immortal* Beings : For 'tis a *Heaven* which consists in an *eternal* Fruition of the Fountain of *infinite* Truth and Goodness, whose *everflowing* Streams are abundantly sufficient to quench the Thirst, and make glad the Heart of every Being that understands and loves. How much therefore *God* loves Righteousness you may easily guess by these *vast* Preparations he hath made to entertain it. For he built *Heaven* on purpose to lodge *righteous* Souls, and that they

they may see he thinks nothing *too dear* for them, he is himself their Feast *there* as well as their Entertainer. He feeds them with *his own* Perfections, and they live *for ever* as happily as their Hearts can wish upon the *Sight* and *Love* and *Imitation* of his Beauties. So vehemently is his Heart set upon Righteousness, that he will have every *righteous* Soul dwell with him and live upon him, and partake of all those *heavenly* Joys in which *his own* Beatitude consists. But as for *Unrighteousness*, how much his Soul abhors it is evident by those *dire* Punishments he hath denounced against it, by those *dark* and *dismal* Abodes which he hath condemned *unrighteous* Souls to, to languish out a *woful* Eternity, to *burn* in Flames there that *never* consume, and be *gnawn* with Worms which *never* devour them; to be *scared* and *haunted* with *Devils without* and *Furies within*, and perpetually worried Day and Night without any Ease or Intermission with all the *Horrors*, *Griefs*, and *Vexations* that an *everlasting* Hell imports. O thou *merciful* Father of Beings! How couldst thou have found in thy Heart to condemn thy Creatures to so *wretched* a State, had not their *unrighteous* Practices been infinitely *odious* in thine Eyes? No certainly; the *good* God would never have made *Hell* for

a Trifle, for the sake of any Thing that his Nature could have endured or dispensed with; nor would he ever have cast any *unrighteous* Creature into it, were it not for the *implacable* Abhorrence he hath to all Unrighteousness: And therefore since he hath not only made *Hell*, but warns us of, and threatens us with it, we may be sure he infinitely abominates *that* for which he made and threatens it; and consequently that he is infinitely concerned for the Cause and Interest of Righteousness.

5thly, And lastly. Another *supernatural* Indication of God's Love of Righteousness is his granting his *blessed Spirit* to us to excite us to, and assist us in our Endeavours after Righteousness. First he sent his *Son* to propagate Righteousness by his *Ministry*, his *Life* and *Death*; and upon his Return to *Heaven* he sent his *Spirit* to supply his Room, and carry on that *dear* Design, of which his *Son* had already laid the Foundation. For in *Christ's* *personal* Absence his *Spirit* acts in his Stead, and was sent down from the Father by Virtue of his *Intercession* to be his *Visceral* in the World, to promote and enlarge his *heavenly* Kingdom, to conquer our Hearts, and subdue our *stubborn* Wills to the Obedience of his most *righteous* Laws. So that the *Holy Ghost* doth

doth now preside in the *Church* as the *supreme* Minister and *vicarious* Power of our *Saviour*, and is continually employed even as our *Saviour* himself was whilst he abode upon Earth in driving on the Interest of Righteousness; for hitherto tend all his *secret* Operations on the Minds of Men; this is the Reason why he suggests so many *good* Thoughts, and by repeating them thick upon us, keeps our Minds so fix'd upon them, that so if possible he may recollect our *dispersed* Minds that are continually wandering to and fro in this *infinite* Maze of *sensual* Vanities, and engage them to attend to such Motives of Righteousness as are most *apt* to excite them to *wise* and *vertuous* Resolutions. So that as in the Beginnings of *Christianity* before *Christian* Motives to Righteousness were believed, the *Holy Spirit* did operate more visibly and miraculously to confirm and demonstrate the Truth of them; so now they being believed, and thereupon the Necessity of such *miraculous* Operations superseded, his *great* Work is to *object* and *present* them to our Minds, and fix our Thoughts upon them till they have effected in us those *good* Resolutions for which they were designed and intended: And how diligently he pursues this Work our own Experience certifies

fies and informs us : For how often do we find *good* Thoughts and Motions injected to us we know not how nor whence ; and how many times do these *unexpected* Thoughts kindle *holy* Desires in us before we are aware? Which Desires being fed by a *fresh* Supply of *holy* Motions and Suggestions are many times nourished into *good* Resolutions, and these being still back'd with those *repeated* Motions which do frequently press with *strong* Importunity upon us, are at last perfected into *firm* and *lasting* Principles of Action. Thus does the *Holy Spirit* continually knock at the Door of our Souls, and sollicit us with the *greatest* Earnestness to *sober* and *righteous* Resolutions ; and this is his *constant* Employment among Men, and will be so to the End of the World ; till *Jesus*, whose *Vicegerent* he is, and whose Absence he supplies, returns in Person from *Heaven* to keep his *last* and *general Assizes* upon Earth. And can we imagin that *God* would have all this while employed his *Holy Spirit* in the Service of Righteousness, to drive on its Interest and sollicit its Cause, if it had not been infinitely *dearer* to him ? No certainly, he sets a *greater* Value on the Pains of his *Son* and *Spirit*, than to busy them about a Trifle, to employ them so industriously as he has
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done in an Affair which he had *little* or no Regard for. If his Heart had not been extremely set upon it, he would have found out some *other* Employment for those *divine* and *illustrious* Persons, and not have engaged them so everlastingly as he hath done in the Service and Ministry of Righteousness.

Having thus explained and proved the Proposition, *That the Righteous Lord loveth Righteousness*, I shall conclude with some *few* Inferences drawn from the whole Argument.

1. From hence I infer that no *Religion*, or Proposition of *Religion* can be *true*, that either directly or by *true* Consequence is an Enemy to Righteousness. For all *true Religion* is from *God*; and therefore to be sure *that* cannot be *true* which either directly or indirectly opposes that which *God* so dearly loves. This therefore is a *plain* Conviction of the *notorious* Fallhood and Imposture of *Popery*, that in all those Doctrines it hath superinduced upon the *common* Principles of *Christianity*, it is an *open* Enemy to Righteousness. As for Instance, it is a *common* Principle of *Christianity* that *God* alone is to be worshipped as the *supream* Author and Fountain of our Beings, upon which the *Church of Rome* hath superstructed the *Invocation of Saints and Angels*, which

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they perform in the *same* Words and with the *same* Address as they do the Invocation of God himself. For though they pretend to pray to them only for their Prayers, yet in their *Publick Offices* they do not only beg their Prayers to God for them, but also invoke them as *sovereign* Gods and *independent* Disposers of the Mercies they pray for. Thus in the *Hours of Sarum* they implore the *Angels* to direct their Thoughts and Words and Actions in the way of Salvation, that so they may be able to fill up the Number of the *Angelical Orders*, which by the Fall of *Lucifer* was diminished ; to protect them from the *Devils*, and comfort them when they are dying. Particularly, *St. Michael* they beseech to be their *Coat of Mail*, *St. Gabriel* to be their *Helmet*, *St. Raphael* to be their *Shield*, *St. Uriel* to be their *Defender*, *St. Cherubim* to be their *Health*, *St. Seraphim* to be their *Truth* ; and all the *holy Angels* and *Arch-angels* to keep, protect and defend them, and bring them to *eternal Life*. And as for *Raphael*, to whom they seem to bear a more *particular* Affection, they stile him the *best Physician* both of *Body* and *Soul*, and pray him to enlighten both their *spiritual* and *carnal* Eyes. And then as for the *Saints*, they do as immediately address to them in their *Forms of Prayer*

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for *Sanctification, Pardon, temporal and eternal Blessings*, as they can possibly do to God himself; particularly the *Blessed Virgin* they adorn with the most *glorious Titles of God*, and in her *Psalter* address to her in the same Forms of Invocation which *David* uses in his *Psalms* to God; they stile Her the *Lady Almighty*, the *Author of Mercy*, the *Queen of infinite Majesty*, and the *Hope of all the World*; praying that her *Mercy* may lighten upon them, as they do put their trust in her; and a great deal more to this Purpose. And as for *Joseph her Husband* they stile him the *Support* of their Lives, and the *Pillar of the World*; beseeching him with his *Carpenters Axe* (a Tool fit only to work upon such *wooden Souls*) to hew down their Sins, that they may be *adopted Timber* for the *Palace of Heaven*. In a word, in their present *Breviary* they implore *St. Peter* to loose them by his Word from the Bonds of Sin, and supplicate the *Apostles*, who by their Word (if the *Prayer* lies not) do *lock and unlock the Gates of Heaven*, to loose them from all Sin by their Command. They humbly intreat *St. Genovesa* to have pity on those that hope in Her, to blot out their Sins, and send them Relief and Comfort; and implore *St. Sebastian* to preserve their *Country* from the *Plague*, to preserve their

Bodies, and heal their Minds ; and to win him thereunto, assure him that *all* their Hope is in him. These and several *other* such like Instances there are of their Prayers both to *Angels* and *Saints*, in which they do as immediately invoke them both for *temporal*, *spiritual* and *eternal* Blessings as they can do God himself, who is the *sole* Disposer of them. And is not this most palpable Unrighteousness towards God, to strip him thus of his *divine* Prerogatives, and clothe his Creatures in them before his Face ? But against this *black Charge Bel-larmin* hath a very *quaint Salvo* : *When we say*, says he, *St. Peter have mercy upon me, or so ; we supply the Sense with this mental Construction, procure Mercy for me by thy Prayers or Merits ;* which is a *plain* Confession that the Words are *unwholsome* in themselves, and cannot be safely used without being corrected by a more *honest* meaning ; and that if the *Votaries* of *that Church* do not take Care to mend their *Publick Prayers* with their *private* Meanings, they incur the Guilt, or at least the Danger of Idolatry. For we cannot address more immediately in any Form of Words to God for any Mercy, than they do in these to the *Saints* and *Angels* ; and therefore if they do not actually address to them as Gods, 'tis because
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they construe those Forms into a *different* Sense from their most *obvious* meaning. For when they say, *Lord have mercy upon me*, they may mean, with as little Force to the Words, *Procure me Mercy*, O Lord, *from St. Peter by thy Prayers and Merits*, as they do when they say, *St. Peter have Mercy upon me*, *Procure me Mercy from God*, O St. Peter, *by thy Prayers and Merits*. And what a *dreadful* Prophanation is it of the *divine* Majesty to use such Forms of Address to God and St. Peter, as do leave our Minds *indifferent* either to pray to St. Peter to pray to God for us, or to pray to God to pray to St. Peter for us? Again, 'tis a *common* Doctrine of Christianity, that our Saviour hath instituted the *holy Eucharist* to be a Memorial of his Sufferings, and a Seal of that *everlasting* Covenant which he purchased by them; upon which the Roman Church hath superstructed that *monstrous* Doctrine of Transubstantiation; which, besides the disgrace it doth to our *holy Religion* by Reason of those *ridiculous* Absurdities and *gross* Contradictions it fastens upon it; it puts such an *extravagant* sense upon the *first* Institution of this *holy mystery*, that if our Saviour had really meant it, 'twould have been enough to expose him to the *general* Scorn and Derision of Mankind. For if when he

first instituted it, he had really pretended to convert the *Sacramental Elements* into the Substance of *his own Body and Blood*, this must have been the Sense of his Words and Actions; these *outward Elements* which but just now were made *Bread and Wine*, are now by my *Almighty* Benediction converted into the Substance of my *Body and Blood*; this very *Body* which sits here at the *upper* End of the Table, lies *there* under those Species of *Bread and Wine* which you see upon it. My *Head and Feet*, and every Part of me, are all intirely within every Crumb of *that unleavened Bread*; and yet those *several* Crumbs, which do *each* contain my whole Body, contain not *several* Bodies; and if you divide them into *ten thousand* Crumbs, and distribute them into *ten thousand* different Places, yet in all those *different* Places I am the same *intire* and *undivided* Body. And though as I sit *here*, you see I am at least a Foot *broad*, and *five* or *six* Foot *long*, yet in those *little* Crumbs that lie before you I am no *bigger* than a Pin's Head; and yet upon my *honest* Word I am in all my Parts and Dimensions under the *outward* Species of every one of them, and so am every whit as *broad* and *thick* and *long* in them, as I do now appear in this *visible* Body. And as for my
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my *Blood* which is at least *two Gallons*, though it is all contained within the *Veins* and *Vessels* of *this Body*, yet it is all at the same Time within *that Cup*, which I confess is hardly large enough to contain the *eighth Part* of it: And though you *Twelve* shall every *one* drink his share of it, yet every *one* shall drink it all, that is, out of this *one Cup* of my *Blood*, which at most contains but a *Quart*, each Man of you *Twelve* shall drink the *whole two Gallons*. But let not these Things astonish you, for now I am doing yet *stranger* Things than these, and *first* I take my self (it being supposed both by *Papists* and *Protestants* that *Christ* himself *first* eat and drank those *sacred Elements*) that is, I take my *Hands* into my *own Hands*, and put my *Mouth* into my *own Mouth*, and swallow down my *Hands*, and *Mouth*, and *Throat*, and *Stomach* through my *own Throat* into my *own Stomach*; so that now my whole Body is intirely within my *Stomach*, though the whole you see, except my *Stomach*, is still intirely without it. And having thus eaten and drank up my self, in the *next Place* I give my self to be eat and drank by every *one* of you. And now while I am wholly buried within *each* of your *Stomachs* and my *own*, I shall begin a *sacred Hymn*, and

conclude with my *Farewel Sermon*. This, supposing our *Saviour* had intended a real *Transubstantiation*, had been the *natural Sense*, or rather *Nonsense* of his Words and Actions in the *first Institution* of this *sacred Mystery*. And what a most *shameful Disgrace* is it to the most *righteous Religion* that ever was, to fasten such *wild Extravagancies* upon its *great and blessed Author*? Certainly had Men set their Wits at work to *burlesque* the most *sacred Thing*, and dress it up for *Laughter and Derision*, they could never have invented a more *ridiculous Disguise* for it than this of *Transubstantiation*: Besides all which, it introduces *two notorious Pieces of Unrighteousness*; the *first* of which is a most *gross and barbarous Piece of Idolatry*, viz. their adoring the *consecrated Bread* with the *highest Species of divine Worship*; which if it be not *Transubstantiated* into the *Body of Christ*, as we are sure it is not, unless our Senses lie, and Contradictions be true; they themselves confess is as *gross Idolatry* as the *Laplander's* worshipping a *red Cloth* hung upon the Top of a *Spear*. Now what *monstrous Unrighteousness* is this, for Men to rob *God* of his Honour, and vest a *senseless Piece of Bread* with it; to advance the *Workmanship of a Baker* into an Equality with *God*, and
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then *adore*, and then *devour* it? The *second* Piece of Unrighteousness which this monstrous Figment introduces, is the *Half-Communion*, in which the *Christian World* is most unjustly robbed of one *half* of that Legacy which *Christ* bequeathed to us in his *last Will and Testament*; which as *Bellarmin* tells us was done out of Reverence to the *Transubstantiated Wine*, lest any Drop of it sticking upon *Lay-mens* Beards should be spilt and prophaned. But this Inconvenience, by the *Cardinal's* Leave, might have otherwise been easily prevented by prohibiting all *Lay-men*, as they do their *Priests*, to receive the *Sacrament* with their Beards on. For I am apt to think there is no good *Christian* but would have been better contented to lose *all* his *Beard* than *half* the *Sacrament*. So that this Doctrin of *Transubstantiation*, you see, hath a most *unrighteous* Tendency both as it disgraces the most *righteous Religion*, and introduces the most *gross* Unrighteousness. Again, *Thirdly*, 'Tis a *common* Principle of *Christianity* that *true Repentance* is indispensably *necessary* to the Salvation of Sinners; upon which they have superstructed their *Sacrament of Penance*, which joyned with *Abso-lution* is of such *Sovereign* Virtue as to *Transubstantiate* a Sorrow proceeding from the

the Fear of *Hell*, into *true* and *saving* Repentance: By which Doctrin they have most directly superseded all the Obligations of Righteousness. For what need I put my self to the Trouble of a *holy* and *righteous* Life, when for allarming my self before I go to *Confession* into some *frightful* Apprehensions of *Hell*, I can be *dubbed* a *true* Penitent, and receive the Remission of my Sins? For now my *old* Score being all wiped off, I may Sin on merrily on a *new* Account, and when I make my *next* Reckoning, 'tis but being afraid of *Hell* again, and I am sure to receive a *new* Acquittance *in full* of all Demands and Dues. And when I have spent all my Life in this *Round* and *Circle* of Unrighteousness, 'tis but sending for a *Priest* at my *last Breath*, *confessing* my Sins, and *dreading* the Punishment of them, and with a *few magical* Words he shall immediately *conjure* me to *Heaven*, or at least out of Danger of *Hell*. Once more; it is a *common* Principle of *Christianity* that the *Wages of Sin* is *eternal Death*; upon which they have introduced their Doctrins of *Purgatory* and *Indulgencies*, which, like *Simeon* and *Levi*, Brethren in Iniquity, do both conspire to render Righteousness a *needless* Thing. For by the *Sacrament of Penance* the *eternal* Punishment of *Hell* is changed

changed into the *temporary* one of *Purgatory*, and by *Indulgencies*, especially *plenary ones*, the *temporary* Punishment of *Purgatory* is wholly remitted, and extinguished; so that the *first* lessens the Punishment of Sin, and the *last* annihilates it: And by this Means are Sinners mightily imboldened to go on, being assured that upon the *Sacrament of Penance* they shall commute *Hell* for *Purgatory*, and that upon *plenary Indulgence* they shall exchange *Purgatory* for *Heaven*. Many other Instances of this Nature might be given, but it would be endless to enumerate all those *unrighteous* Principles with which their *Casuistical Divinity* abounds; the *Frauds* and *Falsifications*, the *Treasons* and *Murders*, the *Slanders* and *Perjuries*, which their *Guides of Conscience* do not only tolerate but commend; For I will maintain that there is scarce any Villany in Nature so *notorious* which by the Principles of *some* or *other* of their *allowed Casuists* may not be wholly vindicated, or at least extenuated into *venial Crimes*. So that considering the whole Frame and Structure of the *Papish Religion*, I do most seriously believe it to be *one* of the most *effectual* Engins to undermine and tear up the Foundations of Righteousness that ever the *Devil* forged or made use of; and were it not for those

common Principles of *Christianity* that are intermingled with it, and do allay, and sometimes I hope overpower the Venom of it, I am verily persuaded that the *Religion of Heathens* would sooner make Men *righteous* than that of *Papists*. For I do affirm that there is not *one* Principle of *pure Popery* that is either a *Rule* of Righteousness or a *Motive* to it, but contrariwise that the most of its Principles seem to have been purposely calculated to *affront* Men's Reason, and *debauch* their Manners; and if so, then we may easily guess whether this be a *true Religion* or no, which in all its Parts is so repugnant to that which *God* most dearly loves.

2dly. Hence I infer upon what Terms a Man may safely conclude that he is *beloved* of *God*; for if he hath that *amiable Quality* within him which is the *eternal Reason* of *God's Love*, he may be sure he is *beloved* of him. If our Souls be adorned with *that Righteousness* which the *righteous Lord* loves, we may safely conclude that we are his *Favourites*, and shall never cease to be so whilst we continue so adorned. For 'tis as impossible for *God* not to love *righteous Souls*, as not to be *righteous* himself; for whilst he continues so, *his own Nature* must needs incline him to love all those in whom he finds *his own* most *amiable Image* and
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Resemblance. Let us not therefore persuade our selves that we are *beloved* of God either upon any *inward Whispers* and *Suggestions*, or upon any *particular Marks* and *Signs of Grace*; for *both* these may abuse and deceive us, and flatter our Minds into *false* and *groundless* Assurances. We may think 'tis the *Spirit of God* that whispers to us when all of a suddain we feel our selves surprized with *joyous* and *comfortable* Thoughts, and yet this may be nothing else but a Frisk of melancholy Vapors *heated* and *fermented* by a *feverish* Humour. For those suddain Joys and Dejections, which are so often interpreted the *Incomes* and *Withdrawings* of the *Spirit of God*, do commonly proceed from no *higher* Cause than the *Shiverings* and *Burnings* of an *Ague*; and I am very sure that *Histerical Fits* are very often mistaken for *spiritual Experiences*; and that when Men have most confidently believed themselves *overshadowed* by the *Holy Ghost* their Fancies have been only *hagged* and *ridden* with the *Enthusiastick* Vapours of their own *Spleen*. And sometimes I make no doubt but this *suddain* Flush of *joyous* Thoughts proceeds from a *worse* Cause, even from the Suggestion of the *Devil*; who, though he hath no *immediate* Access to the Minds of Men, can yet doubtless

less act upon our *Spirits* and *Humours*, and by their Means figure our Fancies into *spritley* Ideas, and tickle our Hearts into a Rapture; And this Power of *his* we may reasonably suppose he is ready enough to exert upon any *mischievous* Occasion, when he finds Men willing to be deceived, and to rely upon *ungrounded* Confidences. Let us not therefore build our Hopes of the *divine* Favour upon any such *uncertain* Foundations, but impartially examin our selves whether we are really *righteous*; for unless we are so, it is not more *certain* that God is *righteous*, than that these our *pretended spiritual Incomes* and *Inundations* of Joy and Comfort, are either the *Freaks* of our *own* Temper, or else the *Injections* of the Devil. For how can you imagin that the God of all Righteousness and Truth can, without *infinite* Violence to *his own* Nature, either love or pretend Love to an *unrighteous* Soul? But then you will say, by what *Signs* and *Tokens* shall we know whether we are *righteous* or no? To which I answer, that there is nothing can be a *true* Sign and Token of Righteousness, which is *distinct* from Righteousness it self: For Righteousness is its *own* Sign; and if any Man judges himself *righteous* by any Mark which is not an Act or Instance of Righteousness, he deceives and abuses *his own* Soul.

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But then we must have a Care that we do not argue from any one *particular* Mark or Instance of Righteousness to our being *righteous* in *general*. For you may as well argue that you are not *blind* because you *hear well*, or that you are not *deaf* because you *taste well*, or that you have *all* your Senses, because you have *one*; as that you are *righteous* in the *general*, because you are so in *this* or *that particular*; and you may as reasonably conclude your self in a *State of Health*, because you have a *fresh* Colour, as that you are in a *State of Grace*, because you have *this* or *that particular* Sign of it. Well, but then how shall we resolve our selves in this most *material* Enquiry? Why do but consider what it is to be *righteous*, and then reflect upon *your own* Motions, and you will quickly feel whether you are *righteous* or no. Now to be *righteous*, is in the *general* to intend righteously, and to act accordingly. If you ask again how you shall know whether you *so* intend and act? I shall only answer, that 'tis an *unreasonable* Question, and that you might as well ask me whether you are *hungry* or *thirsty*; for you do as naturally feel the Motions of your *Souls* as you do the Motions of your *Bodies*; and for you to ask *another* Man what *your own* Intentions are, is to make him a *Conjurer* instead of a *Casuis*t. Would it not
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look extremely *ridiculous* for a Man to ask his *Creditor*, or *Customer*, good Sir, how shall I know whether I intend to pay my Debts, or am sincerely resolved not to over-reach you? Should any Man ask me *such* a Question, I should only bid him consult himself; and if then he suspected *his own* Honesty, I should shrewdly suspect he had *too* much Reason for it. If you *intend* righteously, you *intend* it *knowingly*; and if you *knowingly* intend it, you cannot but *know* that you *intend* it. If you cannot know whether you *intend* and *act* righteously, you cannot know how to do it; and if you cannot know how to do it, you are not Subjects *capable* of Morality; but must of Necessity *live* and *act* at Random, and blunder on like *Travellers in the dark*, without being able to determin whether you go *backward* or *forward*. If therefore you would know whether you are *righteous* Men or no, do not go about to perplex and intangle your selves in the Wilderness of *Signs* and *Tokens*; for if you had a *thousand* Signs of Grace, you can never safely conclude you are *righteous*, till upon an *impartial* Review of your selves you do feel that you *intend* and *act* righteously; and then, and not till then, you may build upon it that *God* loves you. For *God's* Love is a *constant* and *immutable* Thing; and in this the *Constancy* of it consists;

sifts; not that it is always *fixt* upon the same *Person*, but that 'tis unchangeably determined to the same *Motive*, and this *Motive* is Righteousness. So that if he find this *Motive* in us, he will be sure to love us so long as it continues; but if from *Righteous* we become *Unrighteous*, he must either change in his Affection, or else cease to love us. For should he still love on when the Reason is ceased for which he loved us, he must either love us for no Reason, or for a Reason that is directly contrary to that for which he loved us first; and consequently his Love must either be a *blind Fondness*, or else a *fickle and inconstant* Passion. If therefore Righteousness be the Reason that moves the *righteous Lord* to love, we grossly flatter and abuse our selves if we presume that he loves us while we are *unrighteous*. Wherefore as we would not ruin our selves with relying upon *vain* Hopes, Hopes that will sink underneath us, and leave us eternally *desperate* and *miserable*; let us never conclude that we are *beloved of God* till upon an *impartial* Tryal of our selves we can conclude that we are sincerely *righteous*.

3dly. From hence I infer what *grand* Encouragement we have to be *righteous*, for that *God* loves Righteousness is a *plain* Demonstration that 'tis the most *amiable* thing in the *World*; and that it best deserves the Affections of all *rational* Beings, since it hath won his, who never loves but upon the *best* Reason. And what a most *glorious* thing is it to be adorned with the

best of Beauties, which by such an *invincible Charm* endears the Heart of the *most glorious Being* in the World? If there be so much Honour paid to a Beauty that can smite and inflame an *earthly Potentate*, what is there due to *that* that can constrain the *God of Heaven and Earth* to fall in love with us? For what *higher Mark* can our Ambition aim at, than that of being beloved by the *greatest* and *most lovely Being*? Doubtless to be God's Favourite and Image is the *highest Advancement* that any Creature can aspire to; and were I born *King* of all the Kings of the Earth, and had all their *Crowns and Scepters* at my Feet, I am sure my Reason would tell me that to be *beloved of God* would be a *greater Glory* to me than to be obeyed from *Pole to Pole*; and should I entertain a Thought of exchanging the Honour of being a *God-like Creature* and the Favourite of *Heaven* for the *Crown and Empire* of the World, my Conscience would tell me that I degraded my self, and prostituted *my own Glory*; for next to that of being a *God* my self, the *highest Glory* I can think of is to be a Friend to *God*, and this I am sure to be as soon as ever I commence a *righteous Man*. And shall I stand so much in *my own Light*, O *foolish Creature that I am*, as to refuse his Friendship when I may have it on such *reasonable Terms*, and shall need no *other Endearment* to introduce me into his Favour but only that of Righteousness? O thou *most excellent Beauty*, with whose *Charms*
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the God of Heaven is inflamed! What shall I do to make thee mine! How shall I obtain to be adorned with thy heavenly Luster! I will go to the blessed Fountain from whence thou art derived, and with a Heart hungriſg and thirſting after thee, beſeech him to infuſe thy Streams into my Soul. I'll ſhun whatſoever is contrary to thee, and do whatſoever thou commandeſt me, and never ceaſe Writing after thy fair Copies till I have tranſcribed thee into my Nature. And who would not, that ſets any Value upon the Glory of being dear to God? For beſides the Honour of being his Favouriteſ, what an infinite Advantage may we expect to reap from it? For what may we not promiſe our ſelves from the Grace and Favour of the great Sovereign of Beings, who doth whatſoever pleaſes him in both Worlds, and hath the abſolute Diſpoſal of all the Bleſſings that either Heaven or Earth affords? Doubtleſs we may ſafely promiſe our ſelves every Thing both from below and above that can either do us good here, or contribute to our Happineſs hereafter. For ſo the Pſalmiſt tells us, that ſuch is his Love of Righteouſneſs that he will give both Grace and Glory, and that no good Thing will he with-hold from them that walk uprightly, Pſal. lxxxiv. 11. Who would not then be tempted to Righteouſneſs upon the Proſpect of being a Favourite of God, and of the infinite Glory and Advantage which redounds from thence?

4thly, And laſtly. From hence I infer how inexcusable we are if we perſiſt in Sin after the

many Discoveries which *God* hath made to us of his Love of Righteousness. Had we any Reason to suppose that *God* is indifferently affected towards *Righteousness* and *Sin*, it would be a fair Excuse for *unrighteous* Persons ; for what great Matter would it be which of the *two* Contraries we chose, if both were indifferent to *God*, who best understands the Worth and Value of Things ? But now when *God* hath discovered such a zealous Concern for Righteousness, and such an Abhorrence of its contrary, by so many clear Indications both *natural* and *supernatural*, there is no Ground or Colour for any such Excuse. For now no Man can be excusably ignorant which way *God's* Heart is inclined, and we must wilfully shut our Eyes if we do not discern which of the *two* Contraries he would have us pursue ; and therefore if notwithstanding this we still persist in *unrighteousness*, we do in Effect declare that we regard not *God*, and that we will do what we list let him will what he pleases ; that in the Conduct of our Actions we will have the sole Disposal of our selves, and are resolved that *God* shall have nothing to do with us, and that we will not concern our selves in any of our Choices or Actions whether he be pleased or displeased with them : this is the plain Sense of our Perseverance in Unrighteousness under all those clear Discoveries, which *God* hath made of his Aversion to it. Now how *inexcusable* is this, for a Creature to behave it self so insolently towards the Author and Owner of its

its Being; to make him stand for a *Cypher* in *his own* Creation, and to take no more Notice of him than if he were the most *impertinent* and *insignificant* Being in the World? For now it's plain that our *unrighteous Doings* proceed from our *rude* Contempt and Regardlessness of his *heavenly* Will; we know well enough what he would have us do, but either we do not think him worth the minding, or if we do, we are resolv'd to behave our selves as if we did not. 'Tis true, he hath not made as *full* a Discovery of his Will to *some* as he hath to *others*; but yet it is plain he hath so sufficiently discovered it to all, that none can pretend to the Excuse of Ignorance. For, as for the *Heathens*, though they have no *revealed* Discoveries of it without them, yet they have a *Bible* within them, the *large* and *legible Bible* of Nature which lies continually open before them, and proposes to their View in *fair* and *distinct* Characters the Notion of *God*, the Distinctions of *Good* and *Evil*, and the *eternal* Laws of Righteousness; and therefore if notwithstanding this they will be so regardless of its *great* and *blessed* Author, as either not to attend to, or not comply with these *natural* Discoveries of his Will, what Excuse can they make why they should not perish in *their own* Obstinacy? For as the *Apostle* tells us, though *they have not the Law*, i.e. the revealed Law, yet *they did* (or at least might have done) *by nature the things contained in the Law*; and therefore *as many* of them *as have sinned*

ned without this *revealed* Law, shall also perish without it, that is, by the Sentence of the *Law of Nature*, Rom. 2. 12, 14. And then as for the *Jews*, besides those *natural* Indications of God's Love of Righteousness which they had in common with the *Heathen*, they had fundry *supernatural* ones ; they had fundry *great* and *notorious* Examples of God's rewarding *righteous*, and punishing *wicked* Men ; and the *outward* Revelation of the *Law of Moses*, the *moral* Part of which was a *new* Edition of the *Law of Nature*, and did contain within the *Rine* and *Letter* of it, the most *sublime* and *spiritual* Precepts of Righteousness ; and the *Ceremonial* Part of which was, (though an *obscure*) yet *intelligible* Representation of all those *spiritual* Motives to Righteousness which *Christianity* contains. So that would they but have attended either to the *spiritual* Sense of their Law, or to the *Sermons* of their *Prophets* which very much cleared and explained it, they could not have been ignorant either of any Part of their Duty, or of any *considerable* Motive that was needful to press and engage them to it. If therefore notwithstanding this they were so *regardless* of God as to take no Notice of those many *sensible* Distinctions which his Providence had made between *righteous* and *unrighteous* Men, in blessing the *one* and punishing the *other*, of which he gave them so many *signal* Examples ; if they had so *little* Reverence for his Authority, as neither to mind his Law *within*, nor his Law *without* them,

or if they minding the *later*, were so extreamly heedless as to rest in a *mere* Conformity to the Letter of it, without ever attending to its *spiritual* Sense and Meaning; upon what *reasonable* Pretence can their Stupidity be excused? But then lastly, as for us *Christians*, we have not only all those *natural* Indications of God's Love of Righteousness which the *Heathens* had, and all those *supernatural* ones which the *Jews* had; but we have all these *later* with much *greater* Advantage than the *Jews*; for they are all set before us in a *clearer* Light, and presented much more *naked* to our View. For as they are proposed to us, they are neither wrapt up in *mystical* Senses, nor clouded over with *typical* Representations; but laid before us in the most *plain* and *easie* Propositions. The *literal* Sense of our *Precepts* of Righteousness, and of all our *Promises* and *Threats*, is the *mystical* Sense of theirs; and all those *Christian Motives* to Righteousness which were delivered to them in *dark* Riddles and *obscure* and *typical* Adumbrations, are brought forth to us from behind the Curtain, and proposed in *plain* and *popular* Articles of Faith: So that if we still continue in Unrighteousness, we are of all Men in the World the most *inexcusable*. The *Heathens* may plead against the *Jews* that their *Law of Nature* was not so *clear* in its *Precepts*, nor yet so *cogent* in its *Motives* as the *Law of Moses* was. The *Jews* may plead against us *Christians* that their *Law of Moses* was neither so *express* in its *Precepts*, nor yet so

so intelligible in its best and most powerful Motives ; but as for us *Christians* we have nothing at all to plead, but, by *our own* Obstinacy against the clearest Discoveries both of our Duty and the Motives which oblige us to it, are condemned to everlasting Silence. So that when at the last Tribunal it shall appear that we have persisted in Unrighteousness, we must expect the Reproaches of all the reasonable World ; to be exploded and hissed at, not only by the universal Choir of Saints and Angels, but by Jews and Gentiles, and by the Devils themselves ; who will all conspire with *our own* Consciences to second that dreadful Sentence which shall then pass upon us, with the general Acclamation of just and righteous art thou, O Lord, in all thy Ways. Wherefore as we would not perish for ever without Pity or Excuse, let us be persuaded to abandon all Unrighteousness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly and righteously, and godly in this present World ; and then we may assure our selves that the righteous Lord who loves Righteousness will love us also for the sake of it, and express his Love to us in blessing and preserving us here, and crowning us with Glory and Happiness hereafter. And this we beseech thee to grant, O thou immutable Lover of Righteousness, even for Jesus Christ his sake ; To whom with thy self and thy eternal Spirit be ascribed by us, and all the World ; all Honour and Glory and Power from this time forth, and for evermore, Amen.

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